

THE  
**Saturday Journal**  
A POPULAR PAPER  
WEEKLY  
FOR PLEASURE & PROFIT

Vol. II. NEW YORK, SEPTEMBER 2, 1871. No. 77.

HOW THE YEARS GO!

BY EBBE E. REXFORD.

How fast the years go!  
It was only yesterday morning  
That I was a little child;  
I loved the birds and the blossoms,  
And my soul was undivided,  
And life seemed a fair, wide meadow,  
Stretched far and far away,  
Bathed in eternal sunshine;  
But what does it seem to-day?

How swift the years go!  
That was the merry morning  
When no stain was on my soul;  
I have passed through a night whose shadows  
Like clouds about me roll,  
And my soul got stained in the struggle  
By night, along the way,  
And I wandered far, for the meadows  
Are out of sight to-day.

How fast the years go!  
Only a day and an evening,  
A night, and a shadowy morn;  
From the night so long and lonely,  
A lonelier day was born;  
Only a little time treading  
A long and a changeable way,  
Beginning in sun and gladness,  
But leading through gloom to-day.

**Out in the World:**  
OR,  
**THE FOUNDLING OF RAT ROW.**  
A ROMANCE OF CINCINNATI.

BY BARTLEY T. CAMPBELL,  
AUTHOR OF "IN THE WEB," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER I.

UNDER THE STORM.

It was an ugly night. It had been raining fiercely all day, and now the roads were ankle deep in mud, the trees dripping, and Mill Creek—bank full—rolled its yellow flood noisily to the Ohio.

Dark as was the night, however—black as was the sky, and miry as were the roads, there was a woman abroad, under the fury of a terrible equinoctial storm—a storm, the like of which had not been seen for many a day before.

She was a slight, girlish creature, dressed in plain, unpretending black, her head covered by a sort of a cloak, which also served the purpose—in a partial way, at least—of a wrapping; and her small feet were covered with cloth gaiters, which, soaking as they were, afforded but a sorry protection.

The darkness was too deep to permit of her face being seen, but when the lightning blazed out, as it did now and then, it revealed the fact that she was drenched to the skin, and that she was only able to stagger forward.

"Oh! if I could reach Cincinnati," she said, clasping her hands and looking up at the inky sky. "Oh, God! in your mercy, have pity and help me!" she added, while the cold rain fell upon her upturned face like human tears. "I can not go much further."

There was a rumble of carriage-wheels, and then a pair of lights gleamed away ahead, along the road, and the girl knew they were on the front of a vehicle.

"I will stop them and ask to be taken to the city," she exclaimed, at once, but the next moment she stepped out of the path and allowed the carriage to rattle by. It was a stylish affair. The horses were steaming and the driver soaking, but from within came peals of laughter and the voices of men.

The woman pushed back the tangled skeins of black hair from her face, and gazed after the rattling vehicle. Finally it disappeared in a curve of the road, and then the girl, shaking her head, said sadly: "No, I dare not speak to such as these; they are not in the mood to sympathize with a poor outcast." She shivered as with ague, as she said this, and wrung her hands fiercely as if she would rub a stain of some sort from them.

Then she bent her head before the storm, and trudged onward more rapidly than before.

Her speed soon gave out, however, and then she toiled more slowly through the mud.

The winds sighed; the rain fell with an even patter; and Mill Creek roared its hoarse song in the deep blackness to the right of the roadway.

A half-mile further, and the girl stopped and listened to the mad waters.

"What if I end it all here?" she exclaimed, speaking aloud. "That stream would stifle my cries and end my misery; and then, too, there would be no trace left."

She started from the path in the direction of the Creek; walked a few paces; paused; then turning, she fled in the storm, and cityward, again crying half aloud:

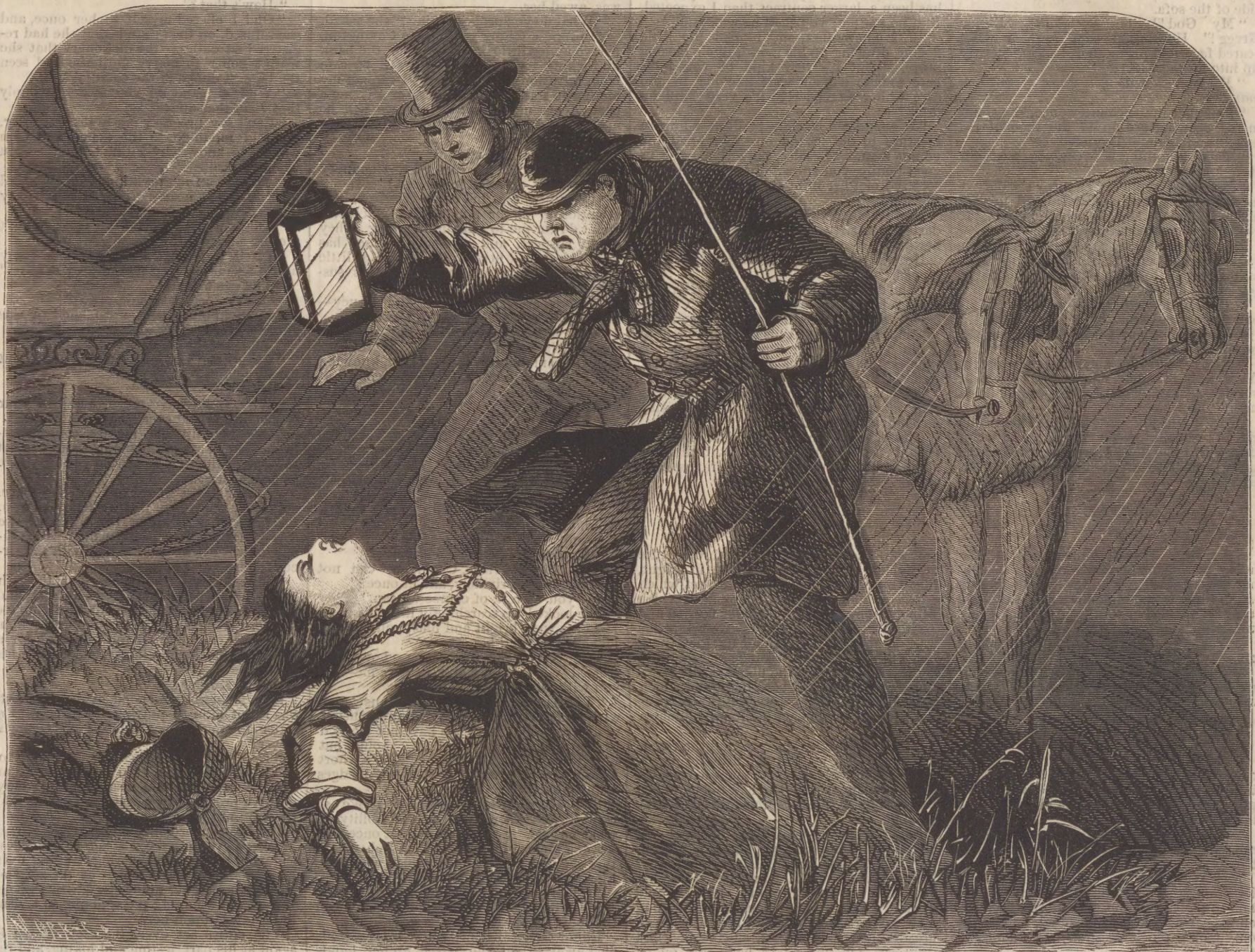
"Oh, no! no! I can't do that; I'm not brave enough for that."

On she sped, as if flying from the demon of the flood who whispered to her of rest and oblivion in a hazy way that almost won her over to suicide; but she resisted; love for life was still strong within that youthful breast; and, sinful as she felt herself to be, she dared not face the judgment seat.

"No, I must live on," she muttered; "I must live for penance and—revenge!" She clenched her fists tightly again, as she said this, and held her breath hard.

The rain fell faster; the darkness grew as black as velvet; her feet were very sore and tired; still she struggled heroically forward, until the lights gleaming from the old Mill Creek House twinkled through the mist and rain, like guiding stars.

"Thank God!" she exclaimed, and then



When the rays of the lamp fell full upon the heap, he saw at once that it was a woman.

she tottered, grasped at a hedge surrounding a nabob's domain, and fell, face downward, on the cold, hard, wet road.

The wind lifted up her cloak, and the rain dropped steadily down upon her as if it would cleanse her of the soil of travel, and of the stain of sin as well.

CHAPTER II.  
AN EVENT.

THERE had been a grand ball, and the beauty of Cincinnati, set in precious gems and sheeny fabrics, fluttered out into the streets of the Queen City, leaning on arms covered with glossiest broadcloth. There were showers of curls, too, and dainty-slipped feet and gloved hands—lavender and purest white, scarcely soiled after the revels of the evening.

The night was too inclement to permit of walking, even for the shortest distance, and so there were plenty of ebony vehicles on hand to carry the precious cargo of merry-makers homeward.

The last to leave the brilliantly illuminated entrance was a fair young girl, and a large, well-formed man.

He was dressed in the extreme of fashion, wore patent-leather boots, a soft mauve-colored necktie, and white satin waistcoat, with pantaloons and coat of deep black. His eyes were blue as summer skies, and his hair, of which there was an abundance, was light, wavy and silken.

He was very stylish, and very handsome, too.

An elegant equipage drove up as they made their appearance in the doorway, and soon the couple were rattling down Eighth street. Near the corner of Baymiller avenue, in front of a splendid residence, the driver drew the reins, and leaping down from his perch, opened the door of the carriage.

The handsome gentleman gave the young lady his hand; led her up the steps, and stood by her side until the door was opened to admit her. Then he pressed her hand warmly, and said:

"I hope you have had a pleasant time, Miss Grace."

"Oh, very!" Thank you, Mr. Watterson; I'm sure I owe my enjoyment entirely to the excellent care you have taken of me."

"Don't mention it, Miss Alward. Believe me, I'm always ready to serve you."

He kissed her on the cheek as he said this, and then, without waiting for an answer, ran down the steps and leaped in among the cushions once more.

"Where will you go, Mr. Chauncey?" asked the driver, putting his head in at the window.

"Go! Why, where do you suppose I want to go at this hour of the night, you blockhead?"

"I didn't know, sir; but I thought, maybe, you wanted to see Nellie or the other girl before you'd sleep."

"Michael Rand, don't you know me better than that?" was the reply. "When I visit Miss Alward I never go to either a gambling-house or to—"

"Oh, very well, sir," was the answer, and then Michael Rand clambered up to his seat, and giving the spirited team full rein, the carriage went rattling over the cobblestones, toward the west end, at a rapid rate.

Presently the houses began to grow scarce, and they were out in the suburbs on the direct road to Cumminsville.

"Ah, by my soul! What's that?"

Michael Rand made use of these words as the horses shied to the right, and he detected something black, like the form of a woman, lying almost beneath him.

"What the deuce is the matter with you? Confound you! go on!" came from within the vehicle.

"There's something lying down here, sir, almost under the horses' hoofs, sir."

"Something? Well, of course—go on."

"But, sir, it's a woman, I think."

"You do, eh?" Chauncey Watterson was out on the muddy roadside in an instant. "Where is she?"

"There, sir. Just to your left a bit," and Michael pointed with his whip.

Chauncey made no answer, but, peering through the darkness in the direction indicated, he was not slow in discovering a blackish heap, that did look, even in the gloom, remarkably like a woman.

"Get that lamp out of the carriage, Rand, and hold it here."

The man obeyed with alacrity, and when the rays of the lamp fell full upon the heap, he saw at once that Michael's conjecture had been correct—it was a woman.

"Here, bear a hand, Mike," said Chauncey; and the two men lifted the woman up and placed her in the carriage. Neither of them looked in the mud-stained face; there was no time for comment, for the woman was either dead or close to the confines of eternity—so close, in fact, that no time was to be lost in procuring aid.

"Drive right home, Rand, and I'll run over the fields for Dr. Glosser," said Chauncey, as soon as the girl was placed in the vehicle.

Michael Rand mounted the box quickly, and, cracking the long whip, was off.

He only drove a few hundred yards, then turned into a long, shady avenue, and a minute after, the carriage stood in front of a long, rambling structure, with many windows and innumerable gables, and two battlemented turrets.

In response to Michael's ring, a stiff-starched porter opened the hall-door and cautiously peeped out.

"Who's there?" he asked, in a slow, drawing voice. "Is it you, Michael Rand?"

"Yes; it's me—Michael Rand—and more than me, too."

By this time the coachman had lifted the unconscious tenant of the carriage in his

stout arms, and was making his way toward the stupid porter.

"Why, bless me! that's a woman," exclaimed the porter.

"I should say it was," answered Michael, shoving the porter aside, and stepping into the hall with his burden. "Is there a good fire in the sitting-room, Johnson?"

"A very good fire, sir. But, where is Master Chauncey?"

"Gone for the doctor—old Glosser. Is the madam awake, yet?"

"Yes, she is waiting for you two to come home."

By this time the sitting-room had been reached, and Michael Rand placed his burden on an old-fashioned lounge, and bid Johnson turn on the light.

The latter promptly did as he was requested, flooding the apartment with a soft radiance, and illuminating the face of the unconscious occupant of the lounge.

"Why, Rand, my boy, she's a perfect beauty!" exclaimed the porter, lifting his eyes and hands at once in admiration—"A perfect beauty, sir!"

The old stupid servant was right. She was beautiful. Her face was rounded, and had a peach-like bloom in it; her lips, daintily cut, had a tempting, pretty pout in them, and one could see, although her eyes were closed, that they were large, and that they must be dark, too, since the lashes lay like black silk fringe on either cheek.

Masses of blackish hair were coiled, like the turban of an Oriental beauty, about her well-shaped head, and out from under her soiled garments peeped a foot, so small and childish in proportions, that it might have belonged to a girl of twelve instead of a well-developed woman of twenty, as it did.

"Johnson, tell the madam at once," said Rand; "the girl is very ill, and women generally know what is good for women."

The porter heard the order, but did not move; he was lost in admiration of the beautiful stranger's face.

"Are you a-going, Johnson?"

"Yes, sir!"

The old servant straightened himself up, and, sighing, turned to go on his errand. But, there was no occasion for his going now—Mrs. Watterson stood in the doorway. She was a handsome woman still, although past fifty; and, as she swept into the room, there was a certain majesty of mien, that told, more eloquently than words could do, of the pride that was in her heart.

"What's the matter here, Rand? and, good gracious, what's the meaning of this?" were her first words.

"This poor girl we found at the bend of the road, and Mr. Chauncey bid me bring her home with me," answered the driver.

"Home with you! Chauncey bid you do this, do you say?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"And where is he?"

"Gone for old Glosser, ma'am."

"The doctor?"

"Yes, ma'am, the doctor!"

The old lady knit her brows, and, laying her hand on Rand's arm, said, solemnly and slowly: "Michael Rand, did you ever see this girl before?"

The coachman looked up, surprised, and, blushing crimson, replied: "No, ma'am, never."

"Nor Chauncey does not know her?"

"I think not, ma'am. He wouldn't have ever known she was in the road only for me, ma'am. I seen her from the box."

"I am very glad to hear it," and saying this, Mrs. Watterson bent over the young girl and scanned closely her features. "Poor thing! beautiful and sinful," she said, half aloud; then, turning to the two men who stood silently by, she said: "She is recovering her senses. Johnson, do you go and call the two girls, and let this woman be brought to the spare room, back. She will need attention immediately."

Johnson left the apartment.

"And now, Rand, you had better put away the horses. You are not needed here."

Rand looked at Mrs. Watterson; then at the face upon the sofa, and then turned away to the stables, saying as he went: "I thought it was something of that kind, myself."

Scarcely had the two men left the room, than the girl opened her eyes, moaned, and closed them again.

Mrs. Watterson took from her pocket a costly lace handkerchief, and, after soaking it in a glass of water, which stood upon the table close by, applied it to the forehead of her strange guest.

The water helped to cool the feverish brow; then the color came back into the rounded cheeks; and again the long, quivering lashes lifted, and the two women looked into each other's eyes.

"Don't you feel better, now?" asked the old lady.

"Yes; I'm better; I can go now. I'm not so weak," was the reply. The girl raised herself up almost to a sitting posture, and attempted to rise upon her feet, but reeled, and fell back once more.

"You are not able to walk, you see," said the elder woman. "Where did you want to go?"

The girl's face blushed crimson as she answered: "Oh, I don't know! Somewhere in the city, where I can not be found, either by my father or my friends."

"Then you are not a wife?"

"No, madam." The girl hid her face now, and the hot tears stained her cheeks.

"You have done very wrong; have been very sinful, and can not expect the sympathy of the good and pure."

The old lady's voice was cold and hard as she uttered these words, and the hand she had laid upon the stranger's brow she now



wiped very deliberately with her damp handkerchief, as if she would remove the stain she felt there.

The girl did not reply at once, but, after a moment, said: "You don't know, madam, how keenly I feel the sinfulness of my position; but, you do not—you can not know, how I was tempted by one whom I thought honorable and truthful."

"Young ladies should have better sense than to believe every thing told them. They have warnings enough, surely."

There was no reply to this, and when Mrs. Waterson glanced down to learn the reason of her companion's silence, she saw that she had fainted again. Before she could do aught, the door opened, and Dr. Glosser and Chauncey Waterson entered the room, closely followed by the two servant girls, for whom Johnson had been dispatched.

"Is she living yet?" asked the physician, rubbing his glasses.

"Yes; miserable people like her are not easily killed," answered Mrs. Waterson, significantly.

By this time, Chauncey had reached the side of the sofa.

"My God!" he exclaimed, Elinor Gregg!" He started back with a wild, scared face, and his mother, looking sternly up into his face, said:

"My son, what do you know of this woman?"

"I met her in the country once," he stammered, growing red up to the roots of his hair, "and again at Dayton."

"There is nothing between you two? On your honor?"

"Nothing," replied Chauncey; "only I met her there, and am astonished to find her here, and in such a condition, too. It really for the moment shocked me."

He was cool now, and Mrs. Waterson said, in a whisper: "I believe you, my boy, and I'm glad to hear that you are not a partner in her sin."

"She had better be removed to a chamber," said the doctor.

"Can she not be taken to the infirmary?" put in Chauncey.

"No; it would be almost certain death. As it is, it is only a chance that she will survive the excitement and exposure of this night."

Mrs. Waterson ordered the insensible girl to be taken up-stairs at once, and when the servant had done so, she returned to the sitting-room to await the return of Dr. Glosser.

#### CHAPTER III.

##### FACE TO FACE!

THE little French time-piece on the heavy marble mantel was ringing sharply out three o'clock, when the fussy old physician came in, tapping his silver snuff-box in a self-satisfied manner, and looking grave and wise.

"Well?" said Mrs. Waterson, looking up.

"Well, she's all right—getting along amazingly fine. She will have to be kept very quiet, though."

"She is not out of danger yet, then?"

"No; not out of danger, but I think—"

"Will she live or die?"

The imperious manner of the questioner caused the old doctor to raise his eyebrows in surprise, and he said, very slowly, in reply, and without lowering his brows: "Live is the word, I think."

"It's a bad thing for her, then. There is no room in the world for creatures like her."

Mrs. Waterson was rich and proud, and Dr. Glosser did not think it necessary for him to reply to the bitter words that fell upon his ear with a pitiless sound, and so he only took a pinch of snuff and nodded at the fire.

"When do you think she will be ready to move?" asked the old woman, after a moment's silence.

"Well, in ten days."

"Not before that?"

"Not without great risk."

"It's too bad she should have laid down at our door. Surely, she could have made to the Mill Creek House."

"It was very unfortunate," was all the little doctor said.

There was another pause; then the woman looked up and said: "Doctor, you must not let her die here. It would never do, you know; and you must never, under any circumstance, speak of her being here."

"Very well," was the reply.

"As soon as she is able enough to move," continued Mrs. Waterson, "she must be taken to the infirmary. You know this would create unpleasant scandal, were it to get abroad, among our set."

The doctor nodded.

"Not that I would be cruel or un-Christianlike, but, you see, a person's enemies will talk."

"Doctor, the young lady is worse," interrupted Sarah, the cook, putting her head in at the doorway. "You had better come right away."

The doctor looked at Mrs. Waterson, as if to say, "by your leave, madam," and then hurried to the sick chamber. When he had gone, Mrs. Waterson called the servant to her side.

"Sarah, you must promise never to speak of this being in the house. It would be terrible were it to get out, you know."

"Yes, ma'am, it would."

"Then you will please speak to Ellen and Jane, and tell them it is my wish that nothing be said of this."

"I will, ma'am. They'll do what you axes 'em, ma'am."

"Let me see that they do and I will not forget them in return."

Within the next half-hour all the servants had been duly cautioned, and Chauncey, who had returned from the stables with Rand, sat planning with his aristocratic mother how the presence of Elinor Gregg could best be kept from the public.

"She can not be moved now," Glosser says it would endanger her life," ventured Mrs. Waterson.

"The dilemma is ugly enough, to be sure; but, as soon as she is able, she must be taken to the infirmary. That's the best and only thing we can do—at least, it is the only thing that strikes me as feasible," returned Chauncey.

"Yes; you are right, my son. But, how did it come that you brought her here in the first place?"

"Why, it's all chargeable on that stupid fellow, Rand; and then, you know, I never dreamed of anything like that being the matter, or I should have driven into town with her."

"I wish you had done so," and Mrs. Waterson bit her thin upper lip with vexa-

tion. "Here we have a pretty condition of things to be expecting Lucy home from school every day."

A shadow flitted across Chauncey Waterson's face at the mention of Lucy's return, and after a momentary pause, he said:

"When do you expect sister Lucy?"

"Well, almost at any hour she is likely to come."

"She has fixed upon no day yet?"

"No; but Kate Allen left Pleasant Grove on Tuesday last, and she says Lucy was packing up then to come home."

Chauncey was about to make a remark when he was interrupted by the entrance of Dr. Glosser.

"My dear madam," said the diminutive man of physics, "the affair is over, and now, I think, you are doing well. It's a girl!"

"It matters very little, doctor, to what sex the little unfortunate belongs," answered Mrs. Waterson, coldly; then added:

"I suppose you will come over in the morning again?"

"Oh, yes; I gave her a soothing opiate. She will sleep until morning now."

"Well, doctor," put in Chauncey, "this has been a larger contract than I expected. But, no matter; you shall be well paid."

"I knew that, sir," replied the little doctor, drawing up his mouth like a closing purse. "But it's very kind of you folks here to take a poor wail like her in and care for her so tenderly; it's very kind indeed."

"It would not be right to allow a human creature to die in the street," replied the young man. "Besides, the girl may be of good family, you know. Judging from the society I met her in, at Dayton, I should say she was."

Mrs. Waterson looked quickly up, and darted a furtive, but searching glance at her son.

He was very calm, and evidently unconcerned.

"She does look to be a nice sort of a person," said Dr. Glosser, in reply to Chauncey's words—"a very nice sort of a person."

The doctor took out his snuff, indulged in a pinch, and tapping the box with his red knuckles, repeated—"a nice sort of a person, indeed."

"We will expect you again, in the morning, doctor," said Mrs. Waterson, rising and moving toward the door.

Glosser took the hint, and, buttoning his coat up tightly under his puffy, bedimpled chin, strutted out into the darkness and storm.

#### CHAPTER IV.

##### IN THE MESSES

WHEN the sunlight stole in through the heavy lace drapery, and directed in bright, fantastic patches on the rich carpet which covered the floor of the chamber in which Elinor Gregg lay, it found her flushed and excited. She scarce could realize where she was, on opening her eyes for the first time; every thing seemed so strange and grand to her—so much unlike the plain, roomy farmhouse where she had been born, and which she had left the day before, with the expectation of never seeing either it or its inmates again.

It only needed a glance around the room, and a shy, coy peep at the little form that nestled up closely to her, to make her realize the depths into which she had fallen. Then came the pain, the woe, the heartache—the remorse.

"Oh! why—why did I ever listen to his promises? Why did I put so much faith in that man?" she exclaimed, wringing her hands, while the hot tears started into her eyes, and her heart throbbled as if it would break.

"And you," she continued, turning and looking at the infant by her side—"you are destined for—misery, and shame, and disgrace. Oh, my God! have pity on us twain! have pity, and take us home to you! We are not strong enough to live such a life as must be ours!"

She clasped her thin hands together, tightly, until the blue veins seemed about to burst, and raised her dark, luminous eyes heavenward, and her scarlet lips moved in silent prayer for pity and oblivion.

The sunlight crowned the purplish blackness of her hair with a coronet of glory; a bird hopped upon the window-sill and sang a cheerful song; the infant doubled up its dimpled fists and tried to cram them into its little rosebud of a mouth, wholly unconscious of Elinor Gregg's pain and degradation, or of its own miserable fate.

The day was many hours old before Dr. Glosser came; then he only remained a few minutes, and was gone. He had scarce left the sick-room when Chauncey Waterson entered.

Elinor was lying with her face to the wall, crying silently; and, although she heard his footsteps upon the carpet, she did not turn her head. She was not in a mood to receive visitors.

He advanced to the bedside until he saw that she was awake, then he turned away and locked the door, and drew the curtains closer together.

His movements, so cat-like, the grating of the key in the lock, the deeper gloom of the room, aroused the girl's fears, and lifting herself up on one elbow, she met the gaze of Chauncey Waterson.

She was about to scream, but he prevented that by covering her mouth with his hand.

"You're a fool!" he said. "Don't you know me, Elinor?"

"Yes, I know you, Chauncey Waterson—know you well! Would to Heaven I did not know you."

"Now, don't go on in that way. If you do, it will make matters worse."

"How much worse could I be?" she demanded, her eyes flashing, and her face growing whiter than the pillows among which she lay.

"A good deal worse," he replied. "I am prepared to do you justice if you have a little sense. Do you know where you are?"

"No; I was picked up from the road-way and carried here when I fell from sheer exhaustion. Oh, Chauncey Waterson, you have cruelly wronged me!"

"Hush—hush! Don't start to cry now. Listen to me. You are in my mother's house."

"No, no, that's impossible—that could not be," cried Elinor, waving her hand, as if she would drive the possibility of such a thing from her.

"Well, no matter about the possibility," he said, sternly; "I'm talking of facts. You are in my mother's house."

She believed him now, and, raising herself up until her face almost touched the face that bent over her, she asked:

"And does she know who I am, and—"

she covered her face now—"and what I am?"

"She knows you are a mother and not a wife, but she does not know that I am that child's father."

"But, she will know it; the secret can not be long kept, and, unless you redeem the promises made to me, I'll blazen it before the world! I am deep in the mire; lost to society, to home and friends; but, I will not bear the brand alone. You, Chauncey Waterson—you will have to bear your share of the infamy you originated."

The girl was excited; her cheeks were crimson, and her eyes held a baleful, mischievous light.

Chauncey Waterson was excited, too, and alarmed, as well, and his hands twitched nervously, as if he would like to bury them in her white velvet throat.

"You must not speak so loud," he hissed; "you will have the house about our ears in a moment, if you go on in that way."

"Well, they may as well come now as later."

"No, they may not, Elinor Gregg. You are playing with fire. Take care, or it may burn you!"

The girl looked into his face; it was full of a terrible threat, which, desperate as she was, awed her.

"What do you propose doing?" she asked.

"I propose taking you over to Covington. I have a nice little house there on the bank of Licking river. There you will be safe from intrusion, and, as soon as I can get my mother to start me in business, or give me a part of her money, why, then, we will be married, as I promised you in the first place we would be."

The girl's face lit up.

"Do you really mean that, Chauncey Waterson? Are you in earnest?"

"Certainly I'm in earnest. Now, pay attention to me for a moment. You see, I won't let me for me to remain here long. They might suspect, and my lady mother has vague ideas that her son has been a little naughty, and it won't do to feed this suspicion."

"But is not Lucy—your sister, Lucy—home from school?" broke in Elinor.

"No, but may come at any moment. You see the awful fix I'm in. Were sister Lucy to come while you are here, knowing the intimacy that existed between us at Xenia, she would let the cat out of the bag, and ruin us both."

"Yes, yes, I don't want to meet Lucy," said Elinor, hiding her face. "Take me away from here as soon as you can."

"Now you talk sense," said Chauncey. "To-night, when the house is all asleep, I'll have a carriage brought from the city for you and the baby. The doctor says it will not harm you a bit."

"And where will you take us?"

"To my cottage in Covington."

"And the marriage, Chauncey—can not we be married privately, and at once?"

"If you wish it, of course we can."

She looked up searchingly into his face. His eyes were bright and blue, and his face looked frank and honest.

"Oh, Chauncey Waterson, how I've trusted you! You won't deceive me—say you will not!"

"This is worse than idle," he answered, with an impatient gesture. "I never meant to deceive you. My plans have not worked as smoothly as I intended they should, but now things look all right, and in a short time I will be able to redeem my pledges without sacrificing my prospects."

She believed him now; he spoke so frankly, and there was a plausibility in what he said. So she told him at once that her confidence in him was unshaken, and that she was willing to be guided wholly by him.

So forgiving is a loving woman!

"Then to-night I'll come for you!" He stooped down, kissed her, and stole out of the room on tip-toe.

Elinor Gregg listened until his footfalls died away; then she raised up her hands and thanked God for the ray of light she thought she saw glimmering through the gloom.

(To be continued.)

## The Boy Clown:

### THE QUEEN OF THE ARENA.

#### A ROMANCE OF THE RING.

BY FRANK STANISLAUS FINN.

#### CHAPTER IV.

##### THE BOY CLOWN AND THE QUEEN OF THE ARENA.

A YEAR has now elapsed since the incident of the last chapter occurred. Time has brought its changes to our group of characters.

Again the scene of our story is in the arena, where the crashing of the band, more noisy than melodious, the clapping of hands, the shoutings and bravos, prove that a triumph has been achieved. A young girl has gone through the ordeal of a first appearance in the ring, as an equestrienne, and has passed it, nobly.

What beauty, grace and elegance she has! Is the admiration of one and all.

Behind that curtain of rough canvas stood one whom the fair young debutante was more anxious to please than the crowded assembly, and, when he clasped her hands, and told her that she was, indeed, the Queen of the Arena, a brighter color glowed on her cheek, and a more powerful beauty passed over her countenance.

"Ah! Henry," exclaimed the girl, "this night, to me, has long been a dreaded one. Who could have guessed that, a year ago to-night, I should now be a member of this troupe, and that you would be the first one to congratulate me on my triumph?"

"You know not how happy it makes me to do so, dear Jessie," replied our hero, with a bright smile and heightened color.

"How strange, how very strange it all seems," said the young girl, musingly. "This night, one year ago, they took me from the roadside, a wanderer without home or friends. And now I have both, and am so happy."

"God grant you may ever be so," said the Boy Clown, for he was now dressed in the points and bells, his remarkable talent in that line having been discovered and quickly developed by the shrewd manager.

Besides, Henry had taken a strong dislike to the trapeze since that eventful night when the villain, Murker, had sent him to the earth, crushed and bleeding, and so it fell out that the change was a very agreeable one to the young performer.

Oh! was not that a terrible night, that of the storm, when the panther got loose, continued Jessie. "And to think how narrowly you escaped, for your old friend Jake says that a moment more and the fierce

beast would have torn his way through the canvas covering," and the girl shuddered at the memory.

"Truly, I was in the hands of a good Providence that night," replied the Boy Clown.

The snapping of the ring-master's whip, and the call from his voice of "This way, Mr. Merryman," here interrupted the conversation, and Master Henry, popping his head from the opening in the canvas, exclaimed:

"Do you want the whole of me, or only my brains, which I notice you are sadly in need of?" The audience stamp and shout, and yell with delight.

"Well, Mr. Ring-master, here I am; and now what do you want of me?"

"I desire you to try to make a fool of yourself."

"You had better do it. You wouldn't have to try at all."

"What's that you say, sir?" with a snap of the whip.

"I was merely remarking that I knew of a young lady who would like to have you for a husband very much."

"How's that?"

"Oh! I offered myself to her once, and she refused, on the grounds that she had registered an oath on the dictionary that she wasn't going to marry until she had seen the biggest dunce in the country."

"Well, sir, and do you mean to imply that I am that dunce?"

"Can't say, precisely; only the other day, you told me to go to the deuce, and then wanted to know why I didn't come to you when you called."

"You are an aggravating youngster, and your sauciness nearly drives me out of my senses."

"That's a very short drive, and wouldn't require a very fast horse to go it with."

"I tell you what it is, if you use any more of your insults, I'll swallow you alive."

"You can't do it."

"Can't? And why not, pray?"

"I'd hold on to your mustache as I was going down, and try to save myself."

"I'll shave it off."

"Then I suppose I must yield to fate; but it will be a benefit to you."

"How so?"

"Why, you'd have more brains in your stomach than you ever had in your head."

It takes but little to make a country audience laugh, and if the clown can but get the best of the ring-master, he is pretty sure of being successful.

Another rider now came on the scene, and every one's gaze was riveted upon him, for he was performing the scene of the "Wild Indian"—a performance which almost always is a "sure card" with the circus company.

While this act was being gone through with, Henry had a chance to look around the vast gathering, and he endeavored to see if there were any faces familiar to him. There was one he knew too well, and, for a moment, the sight almost took away his breath.

It was Murker!

He was there for no good, evidently. Yet, was it not akin to putting his neck into a halter to thus place himself in Henry's power?

But, Murker had not come unprepared to make good his cause. No one had seen him cut the rope on that fearful night; only positive proof could convict him, and that they did not have.

But the performance is progressing, and Murker's eyes are fixed steadfastly on Jessie, who is again in the ring, leaping over banners, flying like a spirit of the air, and then sitting on her noble steed, while gracefully acknowledging the applause so lavishly bestowed upon her.

The entire act over, the Boy Clown is again at his post, jesting and joking, and remarking on the topics of the day, sometimes in rather a caustic manner, but his hits are well made, and the people take them in good part.

With reckless hardihood, Murker had made his way behind the curtain that separated the dressing-room from the arena, and just at the proper moment for his designs, for the first person he met was Jessie herself.

As the young girl caught sight of the lowering countenance of the man she so much dreaded, she started back, with a slight exclamation of alarm.

"So you seem to remember me," said Murker, sneeringly. "Well, it is a good thing that you do. I've come for you."

"You've come for me?" repeated Jessie, as though she had not heard aught.

"Yes, come for you. Ain't the words plain enough? Go an' get your traps and prepare to leave this place," said the ruffian, coarsely.

"Never!" replied the girl, with flashing eyes.

"Won't you! Well, we'll see about that!"

Several of the performers, attracted by the loud talking, now gathered round, and as more than one of them were with the circus when the accident to Henry had occurred, Murker found himself surrounded by lowering faces, and heard mutterings that boded no good to himself.

"What is this disturbance?" asked one of the men. "And you, sir, how dare you show your face inside the canvas, much less the dressing-room?"

Murker slunk under the keen gaze and stern tones of the actor, but he braced himself and answered, boldly:

"I've come here to claim my daughter, and he pointed, with outstretched arm, to Jessie.

"Your daughter! Impossible!" were heard on every side from the astounded crowd.

"It is false!" cried Jessie, drawing back with every appearance of disgust and dislike in her manner. "It is false! He once gave the old woman with whom I lived twenty dollars for her consent to take me away. That failing, he now comes with this infamous story, and the young girl turned away with a visible shudder."

"What have you to say to this, sir?" sternly asked the actor who had been spokesman. "She denies your claim, and we believe her, and the sooner you—"

"But I have the proofs! I have the proofs!" eagerly exclaimed Murker. "She is my child, and there is no power to prevent my taking her from this place."

"Then produce your proofs," said the actor, and see that they are proofs, or it may fare the worse for you. We know you, and I think there is not one present but who would be glad of the chance to give you a sound drubbing."



friends, never once admitting the possibility of an overruling Providence raising them up for her in the hour of need; and so, trusting to a first impulse, he sought out the large cities, and there began the search in earnest.

There must have been some very powerful reason actuating the man to such unusual labor and expense.

It was morally impossible that Murker had fallen in love with the mere child, and it was not at all likely that any feeling of revenge for what she had subjected him to, would furnish cause sufficient to impel this persistent pursuit.

For months Murker persevered in the seemingly hopeless task, never flagging or growing despondent, but always energetic, hopeful, as though he felt sure of ultimate success.

On several occasions he fancied the right clue had at last been found, and each time he scarcely slept or eat until he had exhausted the thread that he had been following only to find that it had led him wrong.

The man's tenacity of purpose was truly wonderful, and clearly showed how deeply important he considered the discovery of the young girl.

At last he chanced to stumble, by the merest accident, upon the right trail, and, like a well-trained hound, he took the scent and was off for the far-away place where she was said to have been seen.

One night, while sitting in a low groggery in one of the great eastern cities, a rough-looking man came in, and all other patrons being occupied by parties engaged in drinking or card-playing, he took a chair on the opposite side of the one at which Murker was seated, and called loudly for his drink.

For some time the man drank silently, but Murker observed that every time he raised his glass to his lips he would glance furtively at him over the edge.

So often did this occur that Murker, who was irritable and cross, finally said, snappishly:

"I hope you'll know me the next time you see me. You ought to know me."

"Beg yer pardons, comrade!" said the man, good-naturedly, "but, yer see, as how I know that mug o' your'n, though, cuss it all, I can't place yer."

"Well, sir, if you do know me, which I doubt, that is no reason you should stare a man out of countenance!" exclaimed Murker, while a dark scowl settled upon his face.

"Thar, I know yer now by that grumpy look on yer face, and some phizagony. Yer Murker," said the man in high glee.

"Well, and if I am, what then?" inquired Murker, uneasily.

"Nothin' pertickeler, only it was funny that I should come agin yer here. Don't reckon me, eh? Well, I knows you. Mebbe yer don't mind the night as little Henry was hurt by that rope a-breakin' on the trapeze."

"What have I to do with that?" said Murker, gloomily.

"Dillon, canvas-man with the Copenhagen Circus, I left it 'way down South."

At first, Murker was reserved, not feeling sure of the man Dillon's true sentiments toward him; but, as glass after glass of liquor was drunk, they grew more and more intimate.

Dillon had been telling him of events that had transpired since he (Murker) left the company.

"We had rare good luck one night, by George! It was the werry night as you—as the boy hurted himself. 'We was travelin' to next station, and a awful storm a-blowin', when, all at one time, old Jake's leaders shied at somethin' on the roadside, which somethin' turned out to be as han'some a young gal as ever yer seen. Well, the manager jess took a likin' to her from the start, and 'twan't long before she was the favorite of everybody in the troupe. I never see a gal I can ride like that 'un! She seemed like as if it was natural for her to be a-settin' on 'standin' on the pad, and though she ain't been with the company quite a year yet, she can jump a banner, bust a balloon, or take the big hurdles 'long with the best of 'em."

At the first mention of the girl, Murker was wide awake, and full of eager curiosity to learn more.

"What is her name?" he asked, almost breathlessly.

"Why, man, what's the matter? Nothin', eh? Well, yer look like a good deal as the matter. What do yer want to know the gal's name for?" and the man looked keenly at his companion.

"Pshaw! Hang it, there's nothin' in it! Ain't it natural that an old member of the company should want to know all about what's going on, and who does it?"

"The gal's name is Jessie," growled the canvas-man. "She's a sweet critter, and the vill'in as would do her hurt had better keep clear of the company, that's all."

But Murker had heard all he wanted, and, scarcely waiting to settle his score at the bar, he was away.

That night, he boarded a Southern-bound train, and in five days stood in the town where the circus had performed some weeks before.

Here he satisfied himself of the correctness of his surmises by obtaining a minute description of Jessie, and then pushing forward in the track of the caravan, he finally overtook it at the town where we left him, in the dressing-room of the circus, confronted by the youth he had so injured, and whom he was preparing to deal a yet more deadly blow.

## CHAPTER VI.

### PLANNING AN ESCAPE.

"WELL, Murker," exclaimed Henry, "what do you want here? Would you like to make another attempt on my life?"

"I don't know what you mean," answered Murker, "I have come to claim my daughter."

"Your daughter! Where is she, I would like to know?"

"Would you, indeed? Then your highness shall be gratified. She stands beside you."

"What! Jessie?"

"Yes, Jessie."

"I can not believe him, Henry," spoke up Jessie, "and yet, he says he has proofs that I am his child."

"If he has proofs, which I am much inclined to doubt, let him produce them," answered Henry.

"You shall see whether I can not make my claim good. If you feel inclined to listen to my story, I will narrate it to you," replied Murker.

"Proceed."

"Fifteen years ago, I fell in love with a lady whose parents were wealthy, and, as I

was poor, they looked upon my suit as an unfavorable one; but, the lady loved me, so that I cared little about gaining their consent. We met clandestinely for over a year, and our love for each other was honest, true and pure. I begged of her parents to bestow their child upon me, but they were deaf to all my entreaties. Finding that it was useless for us to sue further, we eloped and were married. We lived happily for a couple of years, and had a child born to us—Jessie here; but, I took to drink, and though I am almost ashamed to say it, I treated my wife ill. One night, I came home to find my wife had fled from me, taking the child with her. From that day until last year, I lost all trace of them, but this letter comes from the parents of my late wife; I will read you a few lines of it."

He took from his pocket a large letter, and read a portion of it. It was addressed to the old woman in whose charge Jessie had been left, and told that the child's mother was dead; that before her death, her parents had repented of their harshness, and, wishing to atone for it as they best could, desired to make Jessie their heiress, and that if her father were living he would be received as their son.

It was all a mystery to Henry, and he regarded it with incredulity.

"This does not go to prove that Jessie is your child," Henry said.

"Just look at the letter, and see the husband's name written out—Archibald Murker—and I believe that to be my name."

"It is, doubtless, all a forgery," replied Henry.

"Forgery or no forgery, I shall take Jessie away with me, and no one has a right to stay me from my purpose. To-morrow, I will bring legal measures, which can not be resisted."

Jessie clung to Henry, in despair.

Murker left the tent, feeling elated with the misery he was causing two honest and hopeful hearts.

The exhibition over, Henry, as was his wont, accompanied Jessie to her hotel.

"Henry, do you believe this man's story?" asked Jessie of her companion.

"No, I do not. He has proved himself equal to committing a murder, and such a man would not hesitate to utter a lie, or forge a letter," answered Henry.

"And yet, I fear him, Henry. Oh! so much. He may be able to prove I am his daughter," sobbed the girl.

"Don't weep, Jessie. Suppose Murker's story is true, would you not be happier to live a life of ease rather than be one who is at the mercy and caprice of a changeable public?"

"No, Henry. I have something to tell you, but you must not breathe it to a single soul. I am going to run away."

"Run away?"

"Yes, to escape from this man. I am going, to-night, when all is still and quiet. I never—never can live with him."

"Where would you go?"

"To the woods, the swamps. I have heard of hunted runaway slaves secreting themselves there, and why not I? Any fate is better than to be given into his keeping."

"You would perish in the swamps. You must give over this wild idea, and endeavor to cheer up. Affairs may not turn out so badly as you anticipate."

"I dare not wait, Henry. I have determined upon leaving this place, and to-night, for I feel that now is my only chance of escape. To-morrow I will be in his hands."

"Then I shall go with you."

"You will?"

"Yes, Jessie. I will. You will need a protector, and though I am young, yet I will try to be as good a friend as I can. Will you not let me?"

"Oh! so cheerfully. But, I can not take you away from a life that you are fond of. What claim have I upon you, that you should make this great sacrifice?"

"The very best of claims, namely, the duty one dear friend always owes to another. Do you think for a moment that I would quietly remain here and know that you were roaming the world without friend or protector?" replied Henry, his fine face all aglow.

And so they made their plans together. It was decided that the escape should be made at midnight. Every thing was got in readiness for the departure.

Murker was gloating over his success, and little thought that his bird would be flown ere he had a chance to catch it.

His dream was a strange one that night. He dreamed he was a man many years younger, and that he was passing through a lone and dismal forest. Whistling to keep his courage up, for it was a lonely path he was taking, suddenly he thought the air was filled with birds of a rapacious nature. He was astonished at the sight, yet he was still more so when he found, lying at his feet, the fast decaying body of a man. He stooped to look at it more closely, and found in the pocket of the coat, letters, notes, and a small roll of bills. These he took possession of. He thought to turn them to account some day. It was a cruel deed to rob the dead as he was doing. When he emerged from that wood it seemed as though he was an entirely different man—as if he had left his former self in the dread past. He also secured a small locket, in which were placed two miniatures; one was the counterpart of himself, while the other bore a resemblance to the girl, Jessie. Murker murmured in his sleep. "After long years of waiting, how amply am I repaid. It is worth all these years of wandering to be so rewarded in the end." Then there came before him a vision of a pale woman, with a pleading face and piteous voice, crying, "Wrong not the orphan."

The scene changed, and Murker was in the woods again, fleeing for life, to escape the clutches of a grim skeleton, who was in pursuit of him. On and on they fled, the pursuer and pursued, and just as the skeleton was about to place its long hands upon Murker's neck, the latter awoke with a loud scream, and covered with a profuse perspiration.

"What a fool I was to be frightened by a dream," he exclaimed.

He did not dare to close his eyes again that night, but got up and lit a lamp, reading, writing, and plotting mischief against an innocent child. And for what? The idol, gold, for which many a human being has bartered his soul.

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE DEPARTURE.

THE BOY CLOWN slept but little that night. He was too intent over his plans, which were not of a very definite nature. He thought Jessie extremely unwise in what she was intending; but he knew the nature

of the girl, and felt assured that, as she had made up her mind to escape, it would take a great amount of arguing to turn her from her purpose.

"It is a great sacrifice I shall undergo," he said, "for I do love this wandering life; and the laughter and applause of the audience are to me very attractive. It is my duty to go with Jessie. I feel it to be a wrong step for both of us; yet I will not let her go alone. What good will come of it? Likely we will starve in the woods. We may wander on until we come to some farm house, where work can be obtained. Right or wrong, I feel that it is my duty to be a protector to Jessie. May God direct us aright, and make good in the end come from where bad is, in the beginning."

The clock struck twelve, and, as the last stroke vibrated on the night, Henry heard a light tap on the door, and a gentle voice exclaimed, "Henry, are you all ready?"

The boy answered the summons, and, after arranging the few things they deemed necessary for their flight, they took their departure. It was a lovely night. Beauty was to be seen everywhere. The lofty trees, with their beautiful covering of green; the moon, shining in all its brilliancy, made the scene one of enchanting loveliness. Henry and Jessie forgot for a moment their troubles as they stopped to admire it. They seemed to imagine that their trials were almost at an end, when, indeed, they were only just beginning.

"Why are you so silent, Henry?" asked Jessie.

"I did not mean to be; but I do not consider the step we are taking to be the right one," answered her companion.

"I feel it to be right, Henry. But I can not bear to have you accompany me. That is the only thing which does not seem right."

"Are you afraid to trust yourself to my care?"

"No, Henry; I know you to be a good and faithful friend. You have no cause to fly, as I have. You are saving nearly every thing by thus espousing my cause."

"Jessie, I once heard a preacher read from the Bible these beautiful words: 'Whither thou goest, there will I go, and where thou dwellest there will I dwell; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God.' It is thus I feel for you. I have given you my word, and I will not break it."

Strange words to come from a clown, were they not, and yet could they be nobler? As Jessie, I have been thinking that after the search for us has been given over, we had better beg for work at some farm house, and, in the quiet round of duties, forget all trials and troubles."

"Will not Murker find us out?"

"No, for we can change about, and rove from place to place."

The rumbling of wheels caused the run-aways to turn, and discover a team coming behind them. The driver, noticing Henry and Jessie, asked them to take a ride. He proved to be a peddler, and, though traveling in a Southern State, had all the peculiarities and inquisitiveness of a Yankee. They accepted the invitation, and a conversation at once commenced.

"Where might you be traveling at this time of night?" asked the waggoner.

"Not far," was the evasive answer.

"Was you to the circus to-night?"

"Of course."

"Wasn't it prime fun? The fellow that acted out the clown was a smart young 'un. He'll make his fortune! I'll be bound. Don't you think so?"

"Perhaps," answered Henry. "How did you like the lady rider?"

"Oh, she was pretty enough to be the queen of England. If I wasn't a married man, with a couple of squalling youngsters in the cradle to home, I might take a notion to shine up to her myself. But, I guess that Boy Clown was after her, one of these days. He kinder looked at her loving-like when he held the ropes for her to jump over. I seen it, plain as day."

Even under the paint of red and white, Henry's boy-love for the charming Jessie could be read in his face. Ah! this love is a sad tell-tale.

"But," continued the peddler, "I allus like the clown part best. It's in my nature to laugh, and it makes me feel ten times better when I can have a hearty guffaw. My wife is one of the quiet kind, and calls my laughing howling. By the way, youngster, don't you know of some song to cheer us on our way? It'll keep us awake, and I'm near asleep now."

"I'll try to," answered Henry; "but, it will not be a very sensible one."

"Never mind that as long as it's funny." So Henry rattled off the following jingle:

Swiggleton, Swaggleton,  
Wiggling Jane;  
Haggleton, Haggleton,  
What's in a name?  
Swiggerty, Swaggerty,  
Mother and I,  
Biggerly, Biggerly,  
Eat a piece of Kiddiwink pie.

Lickerty, Lockerty,  
Mother's old hen;  
Rickerty, Rокerty,  
Laid a solid pen;  
Hickery, Hockery,  
Sal's got a bean,  
Mickery, Mockery,  
And his name's Joe.

Turketum, Torketum,  
He kissed her so nice;  
Smurketum, Smorketum,  
Once and twice, thrice;  
Jingletum, Jangletum,  
Look in the sky,  
Kissington, Kassington,  
Nobody's by.

Fingletum, Fangleton,  
Sal's an old maid;  
Stringletum, Strangleton,  
Once and twice, thrice;  
Sackletum, Sickleback,  
She'd marry a Jew;  
Huckleberry, Huckleberry,  
There, I've got through.

This seemed to satisfy the peddler, for he stamped with a gusto that showed he was well pleased. It was now time to leave their new-found friend, and, as they saw a large piece of woods not far distant, Henry and Jessie stopped the driver, and, telling him that they had but a short walk before them, left him, bidding him good-night, and thanking him for the ride they had been treated to.

The peddler drove off one way, as Jessie and Henry took the path to the woods.

It was a warm night in the midst of summer, consequently our young hero and heroine did not feel these inconveniences, which they would have done, had it been winter. Jessie was tired, and after finding a soft place to sleep, threw herself upon the ground and was soon lost to all consciousness. Henry was too much excited with the events of the evening to allow him to close his eyes, so that the girl had a watch-

Jessie slept calmly on, and her regular breathing indicated that she was peaceful and calm in her dreams.

And so the night passed, and the gray of dawn was creeping up the eastern sky before the faithful sentinel thought of relinquishing his post for the purpose of catching an hour or so of sleep.

The spot selected for the night's rest was beneath the wide-spreading branches of a huge oak tree, over which a large grape-vine had circled its many folds, thus making still more dense the leafy canopy that served to shelter them from the dew.

A short distance from where Jessie lay sleeping, the main, or largest stem of the vine had taken root, and, as Henry turned to take a glance at the sleeping girl, to make sure that his movements had not disturbed her, a slight, very slight motion, of what he at first thought was the hanging vine, attracted his attention.

It was but a hasty, careless glance, but it rested long enough for him to see that it was something else than the vine that had moved.

Another and longer look through the gloom that still pervaded beneath the heavy foliage, and instantly a low cry of terror burst from the parted lips of the almost paralyzed youth.

Around and around the brown stem he saw the folds of an enormous serpent twined, and heard, as if in answer to his cry, the sharp hiss that tells the reptile's anger has been aroused, while at the same instant, the broad flat head shot forth, nearly reaching to where the unconscious girl lay, and began a slow, wavering motion from side to side.

The light grew stronger each moment, and little by little the true size of the reptile, with its flashing tongue and glittering eyes, became revealed.

Henry had a brave, strong heart and cool head, but in the face of this approaching danger, not to himself, unfortunately, he thought, but to the helpless girl who slept on unconscious of all, he stood completely unnerved. But he soon recovered, and instantly prepared to offer his life if necessary.

Without changing his attitude, he glanced around in hopes of seeing a stout stick that might be used as a weapon of attack, but unfortunately there was none at hand, and when he made a motion as though to go in search of one, he immediately saw that such a step would at once precipitate matters.

Even the almost imperceptible movement he had already made, aroused the serpent to the utmost fury, as if the creature was aware of his intention, and hiss after hiss cut sharply on the silence.

What could he do? He could not hope that the attack would be much longer deferred, and there, in easy reach of the fell stroke, lay Jessie, with her fair white throat fully exposed.

Suddenly he remembered that his knife, a strong, serviceable weapon, with keen edge, was in his pocket. Slowly stealing his hand upward, he grasped the weapon, and cautiously drew it out.

The next moment the blade was open, and then, with a single bound over the sleeping form, he stood between it and danger.

He was not a second too soon, for even as he alighted, the reptile launched itself forward, striking him full on the breast with such force as to almost knock him from his feet.

But, that blow was his salvation. Had he stood his ground an instant the coils would have been about him; but, in staggering back, he got beyond reach of the tail that whizzed past his face, while at the same time he instinctively made a slashing sweep with his knife.

He felt the blade come in contact with a yielding substance, and knew that fortune had favored the stroke.

Such, indeed, was the case. The reptile, a moment before so formidable, now lay writhing and twisting with horrible contortions upon the ground at his very feet, the body nearly severed a short distance from the head.

With a joyful cry Henry quickly stooped, and, raising Jessie in his arms, bore her beyond reach of the terrible thrashings of the snake.

"Where am I? What is the matter, Henry?" exclaimed the young girl, wildly, and, catching sight of the wounded reptile, she uttered a piercing shriek of terror.

"It is powerless to do you harm now, Jessie," said Henry, striving to calm the frightened girl. "You have had a narrow escape, but, thank God, I was permitted to avert the danger."

"Oh! how fearful it looks!" exclaimed Jessie, drawing still further back. "If it had bitten me, I would have died a horrible death."

"No, I think the bite of this species is not poisonous. It is one of the *constrictors*, and kills its prey or enemy by crushing it in the folds or coils of its body."

"Could any thing be more horrible than to have such a monster coiled around your throat and slowly strangling you to death! Oh! Henry, what do I not owe you?" and Jessie placed both hands in those of her companion. The tears streamed from her eyes, but they were tears of gratitude, and, lever-like, Henry strove to kiss the pearls drops away.

Love in these two young hearts was developing early.

"I have often thought I have had warnings, Henry," said Jessie, speaking as if just coming out of a long reverie.

"How, Jessie?"

"It all seems very indistinct to me, but you and Murker are always mixed with them."

"That is not so very singular, considering that we have been so much associated with you."

"I know that, Henry, and yet there is a sort of skeleton ever separating Murker from me, and cautioning me to beware of him."

"You are nervous, Jessie. I think we ought to banish these superstitious feelings from us, and have a more firm reliance in the good Providence that guards the pure in heart."

The clown was preaching like a minister. "I do believe in a Divine oversight, Henry."

While they were speaking, birds in large multitudes were flying in their direction, uttering shrill notes of terror. Rabbits rushed along, squirrels scampered past them, all as though they had been frightened from their burrows and nests. At first, the fugitives were inclined to think pursuers were after them.

Henry and Jessie looked about them, and

saw, far above the tops of the tall trees, thick volumes of smoke making their way up to the heavens, and soon the heat became oppressive; the very air was hot, and they gazed at each other in amazement.

The smoke grew denser and the heat more intense.

At last, the horrible truth flashed through the brain of the Boy Clown, and he exclaimed:

"Merciful Heaven, the woods are on fire!"

(To be continued—Commenced in No. 76.)

**How to Spoil a Husband.**—It is an old proverb that "a man is what his wife will let him be." Like all proverbs, it is true enough to be taking to the popular mind. A man's conduct, his morals, his general thrift are determined by a variety of circumstances. But none among all the influences that act upon him is to be compared with the influence of his wife. A man may be good in spite of a foolish wife; but the chances in any case are against it. A man may be bad notwithstanding the presence of a discreet and excellent woman; but unusual temptation or great depravity will be required to effect such a result. She touches all the springs of life, through her children, through her domestic arrangements, through her personal attractions. She reaches his pride, his ambition, his temper, his love and his passions, as no other one may. The strongest natures can only partially maintain an independence, and common natures not at all. In this paper I shall look only on the dark side of the picture, and sketch a few of the ways in which a wife can destroy her husband. She can soon dispel the marriage illusion that she was good, amiable and angelic. After a few days, let her manifest selfishness; study her own comfort and neglect his; meet his advances with a rebuff; get him angry and torment him till he is furious; convince him that she cares for him only when she has some plan to carry out; that he is of value to her plans, but is used like a printer's type, to be set up or distributed just to suit her caprice. Let her see to it that the house is uncomfortable. Scold him when he leaves, and when he comes home give him a warm reception.

Whenever any thing goes wrong, put the blame on him. Never give up on any question; watch his words and actions, and throw up to him every day, in the most provoking manner, his little mistakes. This will form a first-class receipt for ruining any common man. He will be sure to take his comfort somewhere away from home. If his home is dreary, the drinking-shop is gay and genial. If his wife peppers him, all the more reason for spending as much time with jolly fellows who tell good stories, drink in good fellowship, and have a rousing good time generally! Then, the wife will have a good chance to excite sympathy in her behalf, as a poor, neglected creature, and the husband will be duly regarded as a monster! At this stage of affairs, she should treat him before folks with staid kindness, and with angelic meekness; the trouble will be amply repaid by the liberty which she will have as soon as they are by themselves. If a woman sets out, she can make home little better than a hell. But women do not need to pursue such a vulgar path to ruin. A wife may love her husband and her children, and may perform her ordinary duties faithfully, and yet ruin her husband by her foolish ambition. I say foolish ambition, for there is such a thing as a sensible, thrifty and honorable ambition. It is a good thing to have an ambitious wife. A man is quickened, stirred up, and kept sharp. He is inspired to better his condition and to lift his children to a level far above that at which he started.

But, let a woman's ambition turn on show and seeming rather than on substance and reality, and she will drive her husband to ruin, unless he is made of uncommonly good stuff. She wishes to equal the best. She is ambitious of clothes, of a fine, but extravagant, table. She envies every one more prosperous than her husband is. She wishes a house a little beyond his means; she will have clothes not consistent with his income; she demands expensive pleasures which suck up his slender earnings; she brings him in debt, keeps him feverish with anxiety, and finally poisons his very honesty. Many a man breaks down in reputation and becomes a castaway under the stimulation of his wife's dishonest ambition. For to live beyond one's means is dishonest, and to desire to do so is to desire a dishonest thing.

Let a woman scatter faster than her husband can gather; let her notions of duty send her gadding after everybody's business but her own; let her religion be severe and censorious, and stand along the path of duty like a thorn-locust hedge on a garden walk, which pricks and tears everybody that goes near it; let her secure the art of making home uncomfortable, and of tempting her husband to prefer any other place to it; let her use her husband as seamstress do pin-cushions, to stick pins in; and, with ordinary luck, she will ruin any commonly clever fellow in a few years. Having driven him to a drunkard's grave, she can muffle her martyred heart under funeral-smelling crape, and walk in comely black, until some new victim helps her put on again her wedding suit.

**The Number Seven.**—This number is frequently used in the Bible. On the 7th day God ended his work, the











She sighed and bowed her head, as a tear rolled down her face.

"Why, Bessie, what's the matter? Oh, sister! do not cry, for I wanted to talk with you to-night—seriously, too. I have just been praying, and my mind was made up; I was strong to talk."

"Oh, Ross! what mean you?" and Bessie suddenly raised her head and gazed at him. But, upon the cripple's face there was a sweet smile and a heavenly rest.

"Don't be startled, Bessie," he said; "I do not mind it now. I did at first; but the terror has passed away."

He still smiled softly, touchingly, as his great, bright eyes shone into her face.

Bessie slid her hand down beneath the sheet, until it reached his unwounded palm. She pressed his hand tenderly in hers, and looking him earnestly in the face, said:

"What mean you, Ross? You speak strangely, and there is a wild look about your face. Tell me, my brother, if any dark thought distresses you; tell me it—"

"I will, Bessie," interrupted the boy, as a half-stern look of resolve came to his face.

He paused for a moment; then he said, suddenly:

"Bessie, have you thought, since father's death, night before last, that—"

Well, have you thought how poor we are—how desolate—how forsaken? Have you pondered for a moment on the fact, that now, indeed, we are dependent upon our own exertions, and upon—what is a slender support—the cold charity of the world?"

Bessie Raynor did not answer at once. She bent her head again, as her eyes filled with tears. But she quickly looked up, as a glad smile played over her lips.

She had been thinking.

"No, no, Ross," she said, in a low, joyous tone, speaking rapidly. "Let these forebodings pass from you. I have a secret, told me by poor father on his death-bed. You should have known it before, had not that dreadful accident happened. We are no longer poor, Ross, and can leave the mill any time."

The boy started violently, and, as a twinge of pain shot through his wounded arm, he groaned.

"Restrain yourself, my dear brother; keep quiet and I will tell you what papa told me—will tell you all. Now, will you keep quiet and listen calmly?"

Wonderingly, the cripple gazed at his sister; then, he slowly nodded his head in token of assent.

Drawing still closer to him, Bessie grasped afresh his thin, hot hand, and began at once.

#### CHAPTER XVII.

##### A RAP AT THE DOOR.

BESSIE RAYNOR spoke rapidly; but, scarcely had she uttered a dozen words, when a wild, doubting expression came to her brother's face, and a half cry of wonder broke from his lips.

But, he restrained himself, and listened. At last, Bessie concluded, and, with an angelic smile on her face, and a triumphant glance in her eye, she watched Ross.

"Deeds to this house—to lands in the West—directions for finding Spanish gold! Good heavens! Bessie, can this be true? Am I awake or dreaming still?"

"This is true, Ross. Father told me what I now have told you and—"

"Oh, heavens! then, Bessie, why should I have gone to the factory, when we were rich—gone to be thus maimed? Ah! I—"

"I understand you, my dear brother," hastily interrupted the girl, as a thrill of agony shot through her frame. "I was so troubled and grieved, that I forgot every thing; Ross, except that our father was dead, and that we needed money. There is but little in the house, and, you know, I could not go to the mill. Then, Black Phil, he—"

"Yes, true enough, Bessie. But then, you know, Lorin Gray is our friend yet. Had you told him about these things, the deeds and the money—yet, without telling him, in fact—he would have furnished us means, until we could—"

"Yes, Ross. But, Lorin Gray is a poor man himself, and—"

"He is rich enough to buy good clothes, in which to go to see Minerva Ames, the banker's daughter."

Bessie winced, a convulsive shiver passed over her frame, and she half let fall the hot hand of the sufferer.

Ross took no heed of her perturbation. Perhaps he had not noticed it. At all events, he went on to say:

"This strange, Bessie, that Lorin should care so much for us. Everybody sees that, workman in the mill as he is, he loves Miss Minerva, and people say, too, that the banker's daughter doesn't hate him."

He paused, and his large, bright eyes sought his sister's face.

Ross Raynor was too young, it may be, to read heart-secrets; he did not scan his sister's face to read hers.

"Lorin Gray, though he is a poor man, working in the mill, is a slow, honest man," said Bessie, in a slow, labored tone, as, looking up, she saw that her brother expected an answer.

"Then, in a trembling voice, she continued, as she again cast her eyes down:

"I don't blame him for—"

Minerva Ames. She is beautiful, very learned and rich. But she is not more learned than Lorin Gray. Mother Mull, I've heard say, has sent him for ten years to the best schools in New York city."

"Yes, I've heard the same. But it is strange, Bessie, that Miss Ames could turn away from the many beaux, fine, rich gentlemen, too, who go to see her, and that she should prefer Lorin Gray to them all. I don't believe she does; I can't believe it."

"Lorin Gray is a very handsome man," said Ross, he is young and strong. Then, you know, he risked his life to save Miss Ames the day her horses ran away on the Salem turnpike."

"Yes, yes; I had forgotten! That was a bold deed, and it takes Lorin Gray to do just such a thing. He saved my life, too, you know, by doing what six men can't generally do: flinging the belt from the big turbine. But, alas! I—yes—I have a sister, too," he suddenly exclaimed, "and she is a prettier, better girl than Minerva Ames, rich as the banker's daughter is!"

"There! there! 'Sh! Ross; you speak idly!" and, as a crimson blush mantled her cheek, she bowed her head.

"Then why does Lorin Gray come here?" asked Ross, his mind suddenly turned in another direction.

"Why, he is a common workman himself; we are poor people, too, and he has a good heart. That's why he comes here."

Bessie stammered as she uttered these words.

Ross did not reply; a reflective shade passed over his pale face; then a frown wrinkled his scarred brow.

Was it pain, or was a black fancy passing through his brain?

Bessie watched him.

"Does your arm hurt you, brother?" she asked.

"Not more than usual, Bessie. I was thinking, sister, that I had forgotten to tell you something," and he kept his eyes on her face.

"Well, Ross."

"I have had a vision, sister, a strange, distorted vision which assumed shape."

"Oh, Ross! speak not—"

"Do not interrupt me, Bessie. I'll tell you briefly about this vision. It came to me last night, and all day long have I been thinking of it—have been praying over it! The spring, with its green grass and beautiful flowers, Bessie, will not come to me again! Before the snows have melted from the hills, and the ice has left the banks and drifted down the Merimac, I'll be gone from you! Then you and Ralph alone will be left of our family. Oh, Bessie, I have had a vision of death—my death!"

As he spoke he buried his head still further in the pillow, and closed his eyes.

She shook him gently. He opened his eyes and smiled sweetly at her.

"Another time, Bessie, and I'll tell you all," he said; "not now."

Again he closed his eyes, and in a few moments his gentle breathing, his placid, immobile countenance, his perfect quiet, showed that the poor cripple slept.

Bessie trimmed the lamp, and, sitting by his side, watched him, with tear-filled eyes.

The hours grew on, the night darkened and deepened, and the sad winds moaning along the water, sighed around the eaves and corners of the humble house of poverty. These night-winds seemed to sing a doleful requiem over the dreary house and the desolation abiding within.

Again Bessie's eyes grew heavy. But suddenly she started and sat upright.

A low, guarded rap on the street-door had aroused her.

The rap was repeated.

Bessie arose, as a look of fear crept into her face. She paused, however, ere she turned from the chair. But then, like lightning, a glad expression sprung into her eyes.

"Lorin!" she exclaimed. "He promised to come; he is here. May Heaven bless him!"

Without waiting longer, she hurried down-stairs, and creeping softly through the death-inhabited room, lit by its single unpretending taper, she reached the front door.

She paused here a moment; but, summoning her resolution, she suddenly flung the door wide and softly open.

The light gleamed out, and with a little cry of alarm, Bessie started back at what she saw.

(To be continued—Commenced in No. 73.)

## Overland Kit:

### OR, THE IDYL OF WHITE PINE.

BY ALBERT W. AIKEN.

AUTHOR OF "TITLES OF NEW YORK," "WOLF DEMON," "WHITE WITCH," ETC.

#### CHAPTER XXVIII.

##### WHY JINNIE LOVED DICK.

BESSIE looked at Jinnie in wonder, but, in a second, a thought that explained the mystery came into her mind.

"I understand," she said; "it was your who carried the news of Mr. Talbot's danger to the road-agent."

"I didn't say so," Jinnie replied.

"True; but I am sure that I am right."

"Do you love Dick?" asked Jinnie, suddenly, fixing her keen eyes on the face of Bessie as she spoke.

Bessie was troubled at the abrupt question; a hot flush swept over her face for an instant.

"Do you think that I love him?" she asked, evading the question.

"I know you do!" replied Jinnie, promptly.

"You know?—you mean that you guess that I do?" Bessie said, quietly.

"No, I don't mean any such thing!" the girl exclaimed. "I know it. I can see it in your face. I saw it that night when you looked out of the window. You see I speak right out. I am not ashamed to say that I love him; I'd say it before all the world, and it ain't fair for you to come here and take him away from me. I'd do anything in the world for him—die for him; would you?"

Bessie did not reply; a sad look came over her beautiful face, and she bent her eyes to the ground.

Jinnie watched the face of her rival anxiously.

"You don't answer. You ain't as honest as I am," Jinnie said, a mournful tone in her voice. "You try to steal a man's love away, and yet you don't dare to confess that you love him."

"You are wrong; I have not tried to steal your lover away from you," Bessie said, slowly.

"He ain't my lover, and that's what's the matter!" Jinnie replied, quickly, her lips quivering and the tear-drops stealing into her eyes. "If he had ever told me that he loved me, I wouldn't be afraid of your stealing him away, or any other woman in the world. Dick's too true for that. If he had given his word, he'd stick to it."

"But of what value is this man to you if he loves another woman?" asked Bessie.

"He don't love you!" cried Jinnie, indignantly. "If it was a fair struggle between us, I wouldn't say a word, but it isn't. If you can't take him away from me fairly, that would be all right; but you have bewitched him. The moment he set eyes on you, he seemed like a man in a dream, and Dick Talbot isn't a man that dreams when he is awake."

"What do you want me to do?" demanded Bessie, in a clear, calm voice.

"Leave Dick to me and go away from here; go where you belong; you can find plenty to love and I can't. There's only one man in the world that I care for, or shall ever care for, and you've no business to come here and try to take him away from me."

"How do you know that I have tried?"

"Hain't I got eyes?" asked Jinnie, quickly; "can't I see? If you wasn't here, Dick would love me. He told me once that his life belonged to me and that I could have it whenever I wanted it."

"Do you think that he will break that promise?"

"He can't help himself; you have bewitched him!" cried Jinnie, in sorrowful indignation. "If I should go to him and tell him that I was ready to take the life that he had said was mine whenever I wanted it, how could he give it to me, if you've stolen it? He might try to do it, try to keep his promise, but I don't want a man who has given his heart to another woman. I want his heart all to myself."

With a troubled face, Bessie listened to the passionate outburst of the girl.

"You wish me, then, to go away?" she asked.

"Yes," Jinnie replied, quickly.

"But, one thing you have not thought of."

"What is that?" Jinnie asked, not exactly understanding Bessie's meaning.

"You claim that this man's love is yours by right?"

"Yes."

"Why is it?"

"Haven't I told you once already? I loved him before he ever saw you."

"Are you sure of that?" Bessie asked, meaningly.

Jinnie cast an anxious glance in the face of the other. There was a confident tone in Bessie's voice that struck terror to Jinnie's soul.

"You say that you have a prior claim to his heart," Bessie continued, "but, are you sure of it? How can you tell but that he and I have met years ago. It is possible that I am the first love and you the second."

"No, it isn't!" cried Jinnie, quickly.

"What proof have you of that?" asked Bessie, somewhat astonished at the confident assertion of the girl.

"The best proof in all the world, Dick's own word," replied Jinnie. "When you first came, I had an idea that you were some old sweetheart of his, or, maybe, that you were his wife; so I asked Dick to tell me the truth, right away."

"And did he?" asked Bessie, a strange expression upon her face.

"Yes, he said that he had never seen you before!" There was just a little bit of triumph in Jinnie's voice as she spoke.

Bessie was perplexed. The mystery was getting deeper and deeper; no ray of light illumined the darkness.

"You demand, then, that I shall give this man up, even if he loves me and I love him?"

"You can't love him one-half as well as I!" cried Jinnie, quite fiercely. "It isn't in your nature. You wouldn't have jumped into the river and pulled him out by the hair of the head, as I did. You ain't ready to lay down your life for him any day, as I am. You never held him in your arms and he just as cold and still as a piece of ice; you never kissed his chilly, white lips down to life, or felt the hot tears rolling down your cheeks, thinking that he was dead and lost to you forever. *Thave!* He belongs to me and it's cruel and cowardly for you to come and try to take him away from me."

"Is he not the best person to decide the question? Whether I love him or not, if he loves you, I should not attempt to take him from you," Bessie said, slowly.

"But, you bewitch him!" cried Jinnie, in despair. "He's not the same man when you are around that he is at other times. If it wasn't for that, I wouldn't ask any odds. I've got as much pride as any other girl. I wouldn't want a man to love me who loved somebody else. I wouldn't try for him, but I don't stand any show with you; your game ain't fair. I didn't take any advantage of Dick. He knew what he was doing when he said that his life belonged to me; he wasn't cowering into saying it; he wasn't a bit excited. We stood on the rocks by the bank of the river, both of us wet through, not a dry stitch of clothes on us, and the water dripping down our faces and from our hair, just as we had come out of the river. He caught me up in his arms and pressed me right tight to his breast, then kissed my lips with such a kiss; it made the blood dance all through my veins just like fire along a dry stick. I shut my eyes and I can't tell you on his shoulder. I didn't feel a bit cold then. I didn't even feel the wet clothes that clung all around me; all that I felt was his kiss on my lips. I was so happy that I could hardly breathe. It was the first time, Miss, that I ever knew the meaning of the word, love; and he taught it to me. He didn't ask me to be his wife, but I knew that he meant that I should be some day, although he didn't say so. I was only a child then—it was about two years ago; father was alive, and I lived with him, in a little shanty up the Reese. After that time, Dick used to come and see me every day; he bought me books and used to teach me; but there was one thing that I had already learned, and it came without study; that was to love him. Father used to like to have Dick come, because he could play cards with him. Father used to always win from Dick, and he couldn't play worth a cent, but Dick let him win on purpose. I believe that both father and I would have starved if it hadn't been for Dick. He made a big difference with me, too. I used to go round, without caring how I looked, but, after that night by the Reese, I took care of myself and always tried to look as nice as I could. Now you know all about how I love Dick; I've told you fair and square, and if I ain't got a claim to him, who has?"

Bessie had listened with a face pale with anguish. The simple story of the girl had filled her heart with sorrow.

"I can not dispute your claim," she said.

"You will give him up, then?" asked Jinnie, joyfully.

"I can not give up what I have never possessed," Bessie replied.

"I mean, you won't try to steal him away from me?"

"I will not; I promise it," Bessie said, sadly but firmly.

"That's all I ask!" Jinnie exclaimed. "I thought that, when you knew all about it, you'd do what was right. You can't guess how good it makes me feel. Good-night."

And with a smile upon her face, and a light step, Jinnie left the room. But in the place she left missing, Bessie threw herself upon the bed and sobbed as if her heart would break.

#### CHAPTER XXIX.

##### KIT "CHIPS" IN.

JOE RAIN, standing in the center of the little road that ran northward by the side of the Reese, trembled.

At what?

Around him the pines surged fitfully in the breeze that swept over downward from the great rocky peaks of the Sierra. The tall walls of the canyon went straight upward, like a structure built by human hands, toward the heavens. And from the sky the full round moon shone down, though every

now and then a sullen cloud passed over and hid the light of the vestal orb, as if the dark-hued courier of the sky, sailing upon the bosom of the air, was jealous of the silver sheen.

Rain, the desperado, the man upon whose soul lay the weight of a hundred crimes—whose life from boyhood had been but one long record of wrong—trembled, standing alone in that mountain canyon, at a sound that the pure night-air had brought to his ears.

With every sense intent on the watch, he stood like a statue in the road. His hand clutched convulsively the handle of a revolver in his belt, for the desperado was well armed. Two six-shooters were buckled at his waist, and the blade of a broad, keen-edged bowie-knife, thrust through his belt, gleamed silver in the moonlight.

"Cuss my darned coward heart!" he muttered, as he glared with watchful eyes around; "is a tree a-rustin' in the wind a-go'in' to make me shiver and shake? But is it a tree? No pine that grows in this hazy gully ever made *that* noise. It's some body a-trackin' me, Injun fashion. Kin it be a red-skin a-go'in' fur my top-knot, or is it—"

And he paused; a nervous shiver supplied the place of words. The desperado had not trembled at the first thought; the Indian warrior had less terror for him than the foe whose name he feared to speak.

Rigid as a statue for full five minutes the desperado remained. The sounds of the night and of the wilderness were around and about him. The breeze murmured through the branches of the pines and whistled softly in warning calls among the winding passages of the rocks of the canyon. The river rippled along over its stony path, and fell with a little, sullen roar over the edge of the shelving ledge into the dark pool below, where the spotted trout waited for its prey. The hum and cry of the night insects rose and fell upon the air, riding upon the balsamic breeze, but no sound of human life—nothing that denoted the presence of man in the mountain canyon, fell upon the ears that listened so eagerly.

"I'm a darned fool!" Rain muttered, between his teeth. "I was skinned for a coyote makin' tracks with an once-bell in 'em. Why, I believe that a gopher comin' out of his hole would make me run. I'll go on ag'in."

Joe thrust the half-drawn revolver back into its pouch, and proceeded on his way. Not ten steps did he take, when again he halted, a muttered curse on his lips. His listening ears had again caught the sound that he so feared to hear. But, this time, instead of being behind him, following in his track, it was beyond him, toward the north.

"The darned critter has circled round me fur to head me off," Joe muttered, drawing the revolver from his belt. "All I ask is a fair shake; I ain't afraid." But the bloodless lips and quivering hand of the desperado proved that he did not speak the truth. A deadly terror was on his soul—a terror that unnerved his sinews and made his head sag with doubt.

Again Joe heard the slight sound. It was only some hundred paces ahead of him, and came apparently from a little clump of pines that grew close to the road.

Joe dropped upon his knees behind a huge boulder. Carefully he drew back the hammer of the revolver. The sharp click of the lock rung out shrilly on the clear mountain air.

With an anxious face and a beating heart, the desperado clutched the weapon. The moonbeams danced in wavy lines of light along the surface of the shining barrel.

Then from the covert of the pines, into the center of the road, came the thing that had produced the noise that had so alarmed Rain.

"A jackass rabbit, by thunder!" the desperado exclaimed.

And so it was. The harmless little animal halted in the road, sat up on its haunches, and looked around.

Joe could not repress a burst of laughter. Alarmed at the noise, the rabbit scampered into the shelter of the bushes again.

"Ha, ha, ha!" Joe roared, rising to his feet.

"Ha, ha!" rung out an answering laugh upon the night air, so natural, so unlike a man's laugh, and so unlike an echo, that Joe again started in affright.

"What a darned fool I am," he muttered in anger, recovering from his alarm. "Fust I'm skinned to death by a jackass rabbit, and then I jump like a bit antelope at the echo of my own voice. If I ain't got any more pluck than this I'd better sell out."

Then, again, Joe proceeded onward. He followed the road through the canyon. After it left the shelter of the defile, it turned suddenly to the right, following always the course of the stream, and passed across a little rocky plain.

Half way across the plain Joe stopped. Again he had heard the stealthy footsteps following upon his trail.

The outlaw turned pale, and great drops of sweat came out on his bronzed forehead. With a resolute effort he turned and faced in the direction of the noise.

"Darn the thing, whatever it is!" he cried. "I might as well be killed outright as skinned half to death this way."

The moment the desperado stopped the sound of the footsteps stopped also. Joe listened, but no sound, save the noises of the night insects, the rustle of the breeze, and ripple and swash of the waters, came to his ear.

"Kin it be an echo of my own footsteps?" he muttered, in doubt. "Darned if it ain't more like a ghost following me than a man. My blood feels like ice," and he shivered as he spoke. He had again drawn his revolver from its pocket, and with it ready cocked in his hand, he stood with a gloomy frown upon his rough features.

He was in the center of the little glade, within easy revolver range of the pines that hid the entrance to the canyon.

"You darned skulkin' thief, come out an' face me, if you dare!" Joe said, defiantly. It cost him an effort, though, to utter the defiance. His voice sounded hard and unnatural, even to his own ears.

Before the echoes from the Sierra's side had given back the bold defiance of the outlaw, two forms stood within the rocky plain, lit by the moonbeams. One, the desperado Joe Rain, standing in its center, his bronzed face white with terror, and his heart chilled by the cold finger of black despair; the other, on the very edge of the plain, risen like a specter from amid the pines at the canyon's mouth, was the road-agent, Overland Kit! His face was covered by a mask, as usual, a six-shooter in his hand, leveled with a deadly aim at the person of Joe Rain.

A howl of despair came from the lips of

the desperado when he beheld the well-known figure of his former leader step from the dark cover of the pines.

A moment the two surveyed each other, their revolvers leveled at each other's breast; death in their hands, death in their hearts.

"Overland Kit, by blazes!" exclaimed Joe, in a tone that plainly betrayed that both rage and despair were blended in his heart.

"Treacherous villain!" said the road-agent, in a stern, deep voice, "are you prepared to die?"

"To die?" growled Joe, a fierce light shining in his evil eyes.

"Yes; to die the death that all traitors should die."

"What have I done to you?"

"Cowardly bound!" exclaimed the road-agent, in contempt, "you ask that question even when you are flying, like a thief in the night, from my vengeance. Every time that you have paused to listen for the sound of my footsteps tracking you through the canyon, your guilty conscience has whispered my name in your ear, and told you that I was on your track, and that my mission was one of vengeance. Not a half a mile from this spot I watched you kill Jimmy Mullen. Like a coward, you struck him in the back, then robbed him of his wealth. I did not think then that heaven had destined me to avenge that deed. From my covert in the rocks I watched you depart without making any effort to stay you. I would not be both your judge and your executioner, although I knew you to be a red-handed murderer. Then you went straight to Spur City, eager for more blood-money. Had your eyes been as keen to penetrate my disguise as your hand was quick to strike Mullen in the back, I should have swung from a pine tree. But, your time's up; the game is over; pass in your checks."

"We're man to man lyer; you're no better than I am!" cried Joe, fiercely. "I'm armed, an' I'll play my hand for all it's worth."

"You'd better pass," returned Overland Kit, tersely.

"I'll see you in blazes fust," exclaimed Joe, with the courage of despair; "you just 'chip in' now!"



"Yes," Jimmie said, softly. "I told you, then, that the life that you had saved belonged to you, that it was yours whenever you wanted to claim it. You haven't asked for it yet, Jimmie."

A single glance Jimmie cast into Dick's face, and then again the long, golden lashes veiled the large, clear eyes. "You're right, Jimmie," he said, slowly. "I had forgot. I must treat you like a woman, not like a child. It is not right that you, a woman, should speak, when I, a man, hesitate. But, Jimmie, I have not spoken before because—well, because, I don't know myself; I can't tell what I am or what I think. I'm a good deal like a piece of pine floating down the Reese, at the mercy of every current and eddy in the stream. One moment, I think that I am a strong, determined, self-willed fellow; and the next, I come to the conclusion that a more wavering, irresolute wretch than I don't exist on top of the earth. Jimmie, I belong to you by rights; I know that, and when I am with you I feel that I love you better than I do any other woman in the world, but, when I am away from you—" and Talbot paused, irresolute.

"You think that you don't love me?" Jimmie asked, looking up into Dick's face again with her earnest eyes.

"No, I don't think that; but, the thought comes to me that, perhaps, I don't love you well enough to make you happy," Dick replied, honestly.

"You only think so when you are away from me?"

"Yes."

"There's a very easy cure for that, then."

"What is it?" Talbot asked, in astonishment.

"You mustn't go away from me at all," the girl replied, simply.

A smile came over Dick's face at the answer.

"And so, Jimmie, if I tell you honestly and frankly, that I think I love you, but am not quite sure of it, and ask you to be my wife, what now will be your answer?"

"Dick, when you play cards do you always make the man you're playing against tell you how he is going to play, before you commence the game?" the girl asked, shrewdly.

"Of course not," Talbot replied, quickly.

"And yet, you wish me to tell you how I am going to answer before you put the question. I don't think that is quite fair, Dick."

"Little girl, I'm no match for you!" cried Talbot, suddenly; "there's more brains in this little head than in a dozen like mine. I haven't asked you a fair question, but now I will."

With a touch full of tenderness, he drew the light form of Jimmie still closer to him, raised up the little head with its halo of red-gold hair, until the clear gray eyes looked full into his own.

The smile upon Jimmie's face, and the joyous light dancing in her eyes, told how happy she was.

"Jimmie, you know me as Dick Talbot," he said, slowly; "it is very likely that it is not my name. In other years, and in other places far away from this wild region, I may have been known by another name. Blood may be upon my hands, human blood; why, Jimmie, I may be stained by all sorts of crimes. I tell you this, so that you may not act rashly; but take plenty of time to think it over. And now, for what I was going to say at the beginning: Jimmie, I think that I love you well enough to ask you to be my wife. I ain't quite sure of it, for, as I told you before, I'm like a man wandering in a dark night; I can't see my way clear, I'm willing to risk it, though, if you are; so, Jimmie, will you be my wife? Don't be in a hurry to answer, you know; take all the time you like."

"One little second—only a breath is all I want," Jimmie cried, quickly. "Yes." Firm and decided, but full of love was that "yes."

"A moment, Dick looked into the clear eyes, now lustrous with the light of love; he saw the flushed cheeks and quivering scarlet lips, so rich and ripe in their dewy sweetness, and then, over his soul, like a flood sweeping all before it down the canyon's bed, came a sweet sense of joy, which told him that he did really love the girl, whose little form he pressed against his heart. Then he bent over and kissed the little, full lips that so eagerly awaited that kiss.

A moment of joy it was to the hearts of the man and woman who were so fondly clasped in each other's arms; a moment, worth a lifetime of toil to gain; full recompense for years of doubtful suspense.

The soft sound of the passionate kiss that told that two human hearts had agreed to beat in loving concert till the Dark Angel counted the toll of doom resounded gently through the darkness of the passage-way. It reached the ears of the watcher beneath the stairway.

The sound that told of loving concord, transformed him into a demon of hate. His hand closed, convulsively, over his revolver; death was in his heart.

(To be continued—Commenced in No. 68.)

## Love-Blind:

OR,  
WAS SHE GUILTY?

BY MRS. MARY REED CROWELL,  
AUTHOR OF "OATH-BOUND," "SHADOWED HEART,"  
ETC., ETC.

### CHAPTER XXIV.—CONTINUED.

"You are a gentleman, are you not? A fine specimen of manhood, to come here in my absence and insult this lady!"

Harry glowered down on the man, as he sprung to his feet, all ablaze with passion.

"You'll rue that, sir! You'll—"

"Not a word!" said Harry, as he held his arm tightly about Winnie's trembling form. "I forbid further intrusion upon Mrs. Gordeloup's presence until I resign her to you—which, I think, will be some time, if ever, judging by the advice of my lawyer."

A startled look came to Mr. Alvanley's eyes, but he forced it away.

"You can't frighten me with your bugaboos!"

"I've no desire to, as I conclude your alarm will come soon enough. Winnie, my darling, will you get your hat and scapula, and return with me to New York? I have secured rooms for us—"

"By Jove, you dare not! I'll have a policeman at your heels, you villain, if you attempt such a wholesale outrage!"

Harry smiled carelessly.

"Be as quick as you can, dear. The carriage is in waiting. Let your maid accom-

pany us."

Winnie's face lighted.

"So gladly, so thankfully I'll go, Harry! What shall I say to Lillian?"

A sudden black frown, so intense that she almost started, gathered on Harry's face.

"You need make no explanations to Miss Rothermel. She and this gentleman can arrange their affairs."

His voice was hard, merciless, and Winnie intuitively knew there was good reason for his strange conduct.

Mr. Alvanley arose, rather nervously, after Winnie had gone to prepare herself for the ride to the city.

"I will not remain under this roof a moment longer; were it my own, I should eject you; as it is, I am rather a victim of circumstances, but I can hide my time."

He walked toward the door just as Winnie came in, followed by Lillian Rothermel, who looked anxiously, even fearfully around.

"No!" yelled Harry, catching Mr. Alvanley's arm and jerking him back violently. "You do not leave Fernleigh just yet. Officer, here's your man!"

A detective, accompanied by two policemen, sprang through the French window, and in a second had secured him, Winnie and Lillian looking on in wild-eyed amazement.

"Harry! Harry! what does this mean?"

It was Lillian Rothermel's sweet, terrified voice that asked the question as she clung to his arm.

"Don't defile me, woman, with your polluted hands!" and he flung them off. "It means that you are found out—you have been tracked to your lair, you tigers you!"

Ah! Winnie, see her guilt, her deceitful treachery, her duplicity, on her face!

For a moment Lillian had straightened herself proudly, indignantly; then she grew stony-eyed and rigid; and at last, when Harry had pointed his finger at her, she had sunk, groveling, a heap on the floor.

Winnie sprang to her assistance, but Harry held her firmly back.

"No, dearest; she is not fit for you to touch; her heart is vile beyond conception, and her hands are red with blood—the blood of Edward Clavering!"

A fearful shriek burst from Lillian's lips, and she struggled to her feet.

"It's a lie, a foul, false—"

Then a bright tinge of blood stained her lips, that made her hideous in her ghastly paleness; faster the life-current oozed out between her fast-set teeth, but she still essayed to speak, in an awful, gurgling voice.

"It is a diabolical lie, Harry—Gordeloup! You know—I loved you—hated you—"

And then the thick stream issuing from the blood-vessel broken in the fury of passion and strength of fear, spurted out a fiery torrent—and with it the life of Lillian Rothermel.

### CHAPTER XXV.

#### THE REVELATION.

SOLEMN, even unto the silent horror of the grave, the men looked down on the dead face that lay upturned on the emerald carpet; and Winnie, moaning and almost fainting, lay in her husband's arms.

Harry's low, impressive voice broke the awful stillness.

"Mr. Leslie Alvanley, on condition of confessing your complicity with that woman—" and he looked at Lillian's dead face again—"and acknowledging that you are not Lester Alvanley, my wife's first husband, but a twin-brother, named Leslie, whom Miss Rothermel accidentally met in Switzerland and hired to play the part of your dead brother, giving you all necessary instructions therefor—you will be allowed to return to Europe with no further punishment than your own guilty soul will carry."

Mr. Alvanley had undergone a complete change during these few tragic moments.

"It is true—all true—all true, I swear," he hurriedly said, with chattering teeth, as he glanced askance at Lillian's body.

"And you'll never return to America again, under penalty of the utmost rigor of the law. Now, sir, go!"

He was not slow to take advantage of Harry's mercy; and when Winnie and her husband surrounded the household and explained, leaving the remains of the guilty woman in charge of the police, in the very house where she had, but so shortly before, wrought a horrible deed, little recking how it would rebound on her own proud head.

Skillfully had she hidden the traces of her crime; and but for one misstep she made, one that seemed unworthy of her, consummate plotter that she was, her guilt would have died with her.

But Harry's had been the hand to unravel the mystery—his, guided by a God who had declared Vengeance belonged to him alone for repayment; that God who has since crowned Harry Gordeloup's life with brightest coronals of earthly rejoicing.

It had occurred this way: anguish-stricken, Harry had gone to the library that night when Mr. Alvanley had made his sudden and blighting appearance.

For hours he had walked the floor in tumult of spirit, devising all manner of plans to relieve Winnie of her fate he believed before her, when he suddenly remembered a pamphlet of laws on such subjects that Mr. Clavering had possessed.

He began a search for it, impatient for the morning that would take him to his lawyer.

He could not find it; he stumbled over drawers, and found himself in unknown recesses and compartments, where, as if an angel finger was guiding him, he struck against a carved acorn in the side of the huge secretary, like a snapped like a percussion-cap, and flew open, revealing—

Good Heavens! amid all his troubles, all the crushing weight of his own agony, he felt the blood curdle round his heart.

There lay a tiny silver weapon, and on the barb that was used instead of a ball, was a speck of blood, dried and dull, while a little above was a dull green blur.

What could it be but the poisoned instrument that had caused Mr. Clavering's death?

Beside it was a scarlet-bound book, locked with a golden clasp, that all his strength could not undo; that a blow from the iron pin-rack burst apart.

It did not need many moments reading to convince him of the horrible truth that Lillian Rothermel had heard Mr. Clavering's remark to himself regarding the terms of the will in her favor, and that she deliberately took his life, that she might win Harry back to her.

It was soul-freezing to read it; and then, further on, was a full account of her accidental meeting with Leslie Alvanley, whom she had recognized as Lester; the mutual explanations; her successful terms with him

to aid her in working ruin and wrong where she had resolved to do it.

She remarked how blind were Miss Amy and Winnie, who attributed her exuberant spirits to the mountain air, and when at home, to her love-letters from Switzerland, and the while it was the delicious results of this sleepless vengeance of hers.

Armed with these infallible proofs, Harry saw he could, at one blow, sweep all clouds from his own and Winnie's path forever.

The result we have seen.

Lillian Rothermel, whose revenge had led her into a most daring attempt, had but given into Harry's hand the weapons to destroy herself, whereas she intended he should be utterly despoiled of all he cherished.

To-day, Lillian Rothermel's grave is unknown, unloved, unhonored, while Winnie and Harry are tasting life's choicest sweets.

THE END.

## Sporting Scenes.

### IV.

#### COL. CROCKETT ON A BEAR HUNT.

THERE is no one, probably, who is not acquainted, in a greater or less degree, with the fabulous stories that, at one time, existed in relation to the renowned statesman and hunter, David Crockett. He was the great hunter who, it was represented, slew scores of Indians out of mere sport; who was an absolute terror to the "varmints" of the wood; and to whom a "coon" that he had treed once said: "Are you David Crockett?"

"Yes, sir," replied the sportsman. "Well, it's unnecessary to waste your powder. I will come down." Whereupon the "coon" quietly descended, and, crouching at the hunter's feet, made an unconditional surrender!

He was the Indian fighter who used his TOE NAIL as a whetstone when about to engage in a bloody affray with the red-skin cut-throats; and it was his wife who put a whole tribe of painted savages to flight! Such ridiculous stories as these have led many to doubt the existence of such a person as Crockett. But he certainly existed, and not less certain is it that his life was truly eventful, but not to such a degree as the above would seem to indicate.

The name of Col. Crockett is engraven upon the records of Congress, and is among the brightest names in the history of the gallant Lone Star State, upon whose altar flowed the life's blood of him who had lived the life of a hero and patriot.

At the time of which we write, Col. Crockett was living "in the woods," surrounded by bears, deer, Indians, and all the life that goes to make up the inhabitants of the forest. He was passing a pastime in which he could indulge to his heart's content, and it is hardly necessary to say that his spoils were abundant. Deer, elk, turkeys and partridge loaded his house at each return home, and his family larder was ever richly provided with luxuries which now are rarely attainable by the city epicure. His duty was to hunt the game named—his delight was hunting bears; and in the prosecution of this sport he met with many exciting adventures.

In December, 1832, Crockett found his powder had given out. Matters were thus brought to a standstill until more could be procured. His brother-in-law resided six miles west of him, on the opposite side of a fork of the Obion. Crockett determined to visit him for an additional supply. A great rise of the rivers had taken place—lands were overflowed—the current of the stream was rapid. Knowing that the attempt would be likely to keep him out for several days, he did up a small bundle of clothes, a pair of moccasins, shoes and stockings, a knapsack of meat and bread, and thus, provided for "a time," started.

Several inches of snow were upon the ground, the air was keen and cutting, and when he reached the river, it was spread out before him like a sea. The rattling of the icy crust of snow under his feet, and the needles of ice that put out from the shore, would have deterred almost any one from venturing into the chilling water, but Crockett did not hesitate. He waded until the channel was reached, where there had formerly been a log upon which to cross, but which was now submerged by the freshet. Here, Crockett felt, was the tug of war. If he could pass the slough, the other side could be easily reached. In the slough was a small island in ordinary times, and a sapling stood beside the log upon which he wished to cross. He first cut a forked sapling, which he managed to lodge against the one on the edge of the island. By means of this, he gradually worked his way forward until he reached the tree, when, by feeling around with a pole, he discovered the log three feet beneath the surface of the water. He now went back and got his rifle. Climbing up to the tree, he succeeded in placing his feet upon the submerged log, and commenced crossing it. This was a difficult and delicate proceeding. The water beneath the log was nearly a dozen feet deep, and above it the swift current reached to his waist. But, by great care he succeeded in getting over, when he reached another slough, across which a log was floating. Upon this he mounted and cautiously made his way out, until he reached the middle, when it rolled over as quick as lightning, precipitating Crockett into the chilling water to his chin. He went down with a gasping "ugh!" but maintained his foothold and his rifle. After a time he reached the land, where he changed his clothes, and made a desperate attempt to get up a trot to restore circulation. He reached his destination in the evening, to the amazement of his friends, who little expected the love of hunting would lead him to such hazards.

He secured the powder, intending to return the next morning; but the weather became so intensely cold that he was persuaded to defer the trial until the succeeding day. The weather continued growing more and more severe, and the second day was a full account of her accidental meeting with Leslie Alvanley, whom she had recognized as Lester; the mutual explanations; her successful terms with him

reached the log which had served him so treacherously in crossing. Over this he now passed safely, as it was frozen in the ice; and the submerged log he also made his way as before, the current running so swiftly as to prevent the water from freezing. From this point he noticed that the ice was open, as though some animal had preceded him, and he followed in "the wake."

The shore was at length safely reached, but Crockett had nearly perished with cold. His garments froze to his body, and he made his way forward with the greatest difficulty. His limbs were so benumbed that he could barely stand when he reached his door. Here his alarmed wife met him, and under her affectionate care he soon "thawed out." The track which he had noticed broken in the stream, had been made by the young man in his employ, when searching for him. His prolonged absence had satisfied his wife that he must have surely drowned, and his reappearance was like the dead returning to life.

That night, after the THAW, Crockett had a wonderful dream about a BIG NEGRO. This, the hunter maintained, was an infallible sign that he was to have a battle with a bear. Through his painful life he never knew the onsen to fail; and, having thus been warned, he determined to make every preparation for performing his part satisfactorily.

A heavy fall of rain during the preceding night had turned to sleet toward morning, and the shrubbery and bushes were bent and interlocked with ice, so that it was evident the sport would be attended with some personal discomfort; but a genuine hunter is never frightened by such trifles. Accompanied by a couple of companions, Crockett set out. The former deciding to hunt for turkeys alone, our hero left them, and, calling off his three dogs, took a different direction. He went a half-dozen miles up the river, then struck across the mainland to the Obion, several miles distant. Reaching this, he went down-stream, the sleet stinging his face like the fall of shot, and his progress becoming more and more difficult as he pressed further into the wood.

Shortly after, his dogs started a flock of turkeys, Crockett shot a couple of the finest and stung them over his shoulders. He kept on down the river, until, feeling tired, he sat down upon a fallen tree for rest. He sat thus but a few minutes, when his attention was arrested by the singular action of one of his dogs, who ran to a log, and, after smelling around it for a few moments, pointed his nose to the sky, then gave vent to a long, peculiar whine, and darted away, followed by the other dogs. Crockett knew what these actions meant, and started after them. In a few moments he heard them barking clamorously, and, coming up, found they were barking up the wrong tree, as no game was visible.

In a moment they dashed off, and were heard barking in another place, but Crockett found they had committed the same blunder over. This they repeated again and again, until the hunter became so enraged at their conduct that he determined to shoot the leading dog, at least. With his mind fully made up to this, he hurried forward until he reached the edge of a small prairie, when his eyes were greeted by the sight of a most enormous black bear. The dogs had repeated their provoking stratagems in order that the hunter might keep up with them, as their instinct taught them better than to attack the formidable animal alone.

Crockett's eye sparkled as he caught sight of the brute. Dropping his turkeys, he started on a run, the dogs cantering and barking beside him. These manifestations alarmed the bear, who started off on a lumbering trot and plunged into a thicket before Crockett could reach him. When the bear again came to view, Crockett saw him climbing a large tree. Reaching a limb, he coolly seated himself with his breast toward the hunter. The latter stole along until within seventy or eighty yards, when he raised his rifle and fired. The brute gave a start and snort of alarm, but maintained his position. Crockett immediately loaded and fired again, when the bear came tumbling to the ground, catching his favorite dog in one of his death-lungs. Crockett dropped his rifle, and, armed with his knife and tomahawk, rushed forward, intending to end the battle at once. As soon as the wounded animal caught sight of his enemy, he let go the dog and made for the man. Crockett, fully aware of the hugging propensities of bruin, made a rapid retreat to his gun, which he loaded and fired into the bear the third time. This finished the game immediately, and the hunter started home for means to transport the carcass thither. Four horses were necessary for the service, and Crockett states that, in all his hunts, he came across but one bear that exceeded this in size. He weighed fully six hundred pounds.

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## MIND YOUR PUNCTUATION.

BY H. A. FRANCIS.

A countryman to London came,  
And, starting up at signs and names,  
Spied on a sign in letters bold—  
In letters made of solid gold—  
The following: "What! sit, do you think  
I'll treat you for nothing and give you some  
drink?"

"God bless him—he's a generous man;  
He's doing all the good he can;  
I'll just step in, and look and try  
This good man's hospitality!"  
Thus musing to himself, he went  
Into the good man's restaurant;  
He looked, and then he thought he'd try  
His appetite to satisfy.

He ordered this, he ordered that,  
And things to French he pointed at;  
Duck, pheasant, goose and Santa Cruz,  
One fillet de boeuf, and all such stuff,  
Until—with several buttons loose—  
He felt that he had had enough.

Then to the counter—just to thank  
The courteous, liberal-hearted host—  
He went. There to his health he drank,  
And there proposed the following toast:  
"Here's to the health of the man—  
Who'll treat you for nothing and give you some  
drink!"

"What's that! what's that!" the landlord cried;  
"Treat you for nothing—read my sign!"  
"I did, sir," rustlers replied;  
"I read it—every word and line;  
It plainly says: 'What, sir, do you think  
I'll treat you for nothing and give you some  
drink?'"

"Ha! ha!" the landlord laughed; "you fool,  
Where did you get your education?  
Pray! did you never go to school?  
And learn to mind the punctuation?  
My sign says: 'What, sir, do you think  
I'll treat you for nothing and give you some  
drink?'"

## Josa.

BY AGILE PENNE.

MEXICO had fallen, and the fight was done. The luckless Emperor, a helpless prisoner in the hands of the merciless Mexican; and I, Colonel Dick Sara, concealed in the house of a friendly Spaniard, awaiting a chance to escape from the city, and from the power of the blood-thirsty soldiers of the Republic.

A Southerner by birth, I had fought for the "stars and bars" until Lee's sun had set on the gory Virginia field; then I had sought service in Mexico under the Austrian Arch-Duke. And hard service it was, too; not a great deal of fighting, but a terrible amount of hard work, marching and counter-marching, very scanty rations, and no pay to speak of.

In one of the last affairs of the campaign, I had received a severe wound, a lance-thrust through the left shoulder, which relieved me from active duty for a while.

Thus it was that I was not taken prisoner by the victorious army of the half-breed President of the Mexican Republic.

As soon as my wound healed, I determined to attempt to escape from the city, and find refuge beneath the starry flag of my native land once more.

My kind friend procured a disguise, and so, one dark night, attired like an honest farmer, and mounted on a sturdy mustang, I bade farewell to the Mexican capital. Being well armed—a couple of revolvers and a breech-loading Colt rifle—I had little fear of the gentlemen of the highway who render traveling so unsafe in Mexico.

For three days had I pushed on straight for the Mexican frontier. On the afternoon of the third, climbing a steep hill, the road densely fringed with the cactus and the pino, the heat of the sun and the dust of the way combined to give me an intense thirst. But, on reaching the top of the hill, I discovered a little rude hut perched by the side of the road.

I drew rein and halted by the door. In answer to my summons, a Mexican girl came from the adobe hut. She was a pretty, brown-cheeked lass, with eyes as bright and as large as a deer. A troubled look appeared upon the face of the maid when she beheld me; a look, the cause of which I could not understand.

"Can I have a glass of water, or of mes-cal?" I asked, although I had but little hope of getting a draught of the ardent Mexican liquor in that lonely spot.

"No, señor," replied the girl, but, before she could continue her speech, a brawny Mexican stepped from behind the shelter of the pino trees. He was an ugly fellow, with a heavy black beard and lowering, evil-looking eyes.

"Why do you say no, Josa?" he demanded, scowling at the girl. "There is a flask of mes-cal hanging against the wall. You are welcome to it, señor, although it is poor stuff," then he smiled, showed his white teeth, and removed his broad-leaved hat, politely. "Will the señor dismount and enter my poor house?"

Truth to say, I was not sorry to accept the invitation, for I had been in the saddle since daybreak.

I dismounted and entered the house. The Mexican produced the flask of mes-cal and a leather drinking-cup. A single swallow of the fiery liquor convinced me that the Mexican had spoken the truth when he had said that it was but poor stuff. Worse liquor my lips had never tasted.

My host noticed the grimace upon my face as I tasted the wretched decoction.

"It is bad, señor," he exclaimed, in a tone of conviction. I did not attempt to deny the truth.

"I will fetch you some water from the spring," and seizing on an iron pan, he bade the girl follow him, and left the hut. I noticed that the girl seemed to obey the bidding with reluctance, and cast a peculiar glance at me as she disappeared in the doorway. I wondered something at this, but gave it but little heed.

The two were absent some ten minutes, then they returned with the water. The face of the girl seemed paler than before, and there was a strange light shining in her eyes.

Mixing the liquor and the water together, I succeeded in allaying my thirst a little. I offered the Mexican a silver piece for his trouble, which he, with great dignity, refused.

"No, señor!" he exclaimed, drawing himself up, loftily. "Hospitality is a virtue."

I did not press the coin upon him, but contented myself with thanking him for the service. Then once more I leaped into the saddle and set off.

A half a dozen strides and I was fain to pull up, my horse dead lame. I dismounted and examined the hoofs of the animal, thinking that, perhaps, a thorn of the cactus had got into the flesh of the hoofs; but not a sign of such a thing did I see. The Mexican proffered his services, but his

search was as fruitless as my own. Night was coming on rapidly; already the sun had sunk behind the western hills, and evening's dusky mantle begun to veil in the earth.

"Caramba!" exclaimed the Mexican, suddenly; "let the señor stay with me to-night; to-morrow, the beast may be well. My house is poor, but it is at the service of the señor."

Seeing no other course open, I accepted the freely-given invitation in the same spirit with which it was bestowed. So, I returned to the house. My beast was stabled in a rude shed at the back of the hut, and I prepared to make myself comfortable for the night.

In a short time, a middle-aged dame, with a hard, repulsive face entered the hut. The Mexican introduced her as his wife. Supper was prepared, and I partook of the frugal meal.

The Mexican, who informed me that he was called Pedro Santilla, took a wonderful fancy to my rifle. It was the first breech-loader that he had seen, and he could not sufficiently express his admiration of it.

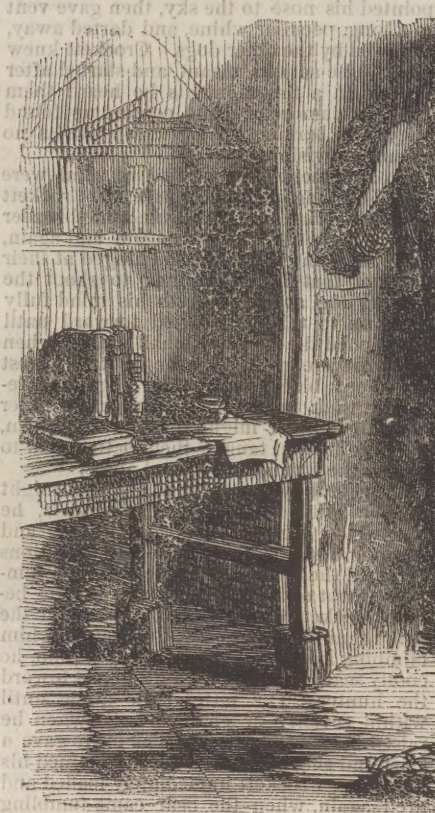
And all the time he was speaking, the eyes of the girl, Josa, were fixed upon me in a strange, peculiar way. The glittering eyes of the girl seemed to convey a warning. But, against what? was the question I put to myself. I looked at the Mexican and his wife. Their faces were ugly, forbidding; but, was there danger to be apprehended from them? At any rate, I determined to be upon my guard.

Supper over, the Mexican, with the courtly politeness so common to his race, tendered me a handful of cigars. Then we sat and smoked, while the girl and the old woman crouched like two witches by the side of the fire-place.

The host observed that it was with difficulty that I kept my eyes open, and bade the old woman prepare a bed for me. A rude mattress, a tattered blanket, and a quantity of straw, were spread upon the floor. The Mexican explained that he, his wife, and the girl, whom he spoke of as his niece, would find accommodations in the adjoining apartment.

Bearing the flickering candle, the host retired, followed by the two women, the girl last. And, as I caught a glimpse of her face, as she turned in the doorway, I fancied that on her lips was the word, "Be wary!"

With a feeling of depression weighing upon my spirits, I lay down upon the rude bed, and drew the ragged blanket over me.



I was determined not to sleep, although leaden weights seemed attached to my eyelids.

I had placed my rifle carefully by my side, carelessly throwing a corner of the blanket over it. One of my revolvers I thrust into my bosom, the other I left hanging in its place at my belt. I was fully prepared for violence, if violence was meant. Still, I could not refrain from thinking that, possibly, my fear was a foolish one, and that I had no just grounds of apprehension.

I had lain quiet probably twenty minutes, when I became aware that some one was in the room, and that that some one was a woman, for I could hear the rustle of her dress. She was moving cautiously toward me. I thrust my hand into my bosom and grasped the hilt of my revolver. Although the motion seemed almost noiseless, yet, by some instinct, the person in the room seemed to have detected that I was preparing for an attack, for a low, soft, "Hist!" floated on the air. I recognized the tones at once. It was the girl, Josa, who spoke.

"The señor is in great danger," she whispered.

"In danger?" I asked, in the same cautious tone.

"Yes, Santilla means to kill and rob the señor."

This was startling intelligence, indeed. I could hardly believe my ears.

"The señor's horse was lamed by Santilla; he drove a piece of steel into its hoof," she continued.

My teeth came together in rage, and my hand convulsively closed over the butt of my pistol.

When you are asleep, they will come. They think the door gone to the village at the foot of the hill; they sent me that I might not warn you."

And then, as noiselessly as she appeared, she left the room, and I was alone with my thoughts, which were far from being pleasant ones. I suppose it is needless to add, that all thoughts of sleep fled from me instantly.

Time passed on; I could almost count the minutes by the slow and regular beatings of my heart. At last came the slight sound that I had waited for so anxiously; it was the noise of the door opening slowly. I had turned my head on one side so that I could watch the movements of the assassins without betraying to them that I was awake.

Bearing a candle in her hand, the old hag came into the room; the Mexican remained, half hid, in the doorway. Bending over me, the woman flashed the candle near

to my face. My regular breathing, and my apparently close-shut eyes, deceived her.

"The heretic sleeps," she muttered, in a self-satisfied tone, to the Mexican.

"Good; I can dispatch him easily," and I could hear the wretch chuckle to himself. Then he advanced into the room. From his belt he drew a long, shining knife. I recognized the weapon; 'twas the murderous blade usually carried by the Mexican bandits. He raised his arm to deal the death stroke, when, with a sudden movement, I drew the revolver from my bosom, unclosed my eyes, and leveled the weapon at his head; I had previously cocked it.

Never, in all my life, had I seen such a spectacle of fear as the face of the unmasked assassin presented. A moment he glared in agony into my face, and then, with a howl of terror, fled from the room, followed by the woman, who dropped the candle in her flight. Luckily it was not extinguished. Hastily dressing myself, I sought the rude shed where my horse had been placed. I found the animal safe, and the girl standing by its side. With a smile, she drew the slender piece of steel from the hoof, where the villainous Mexican had driven it.

And why had the girl taken so much trouble to save the life of a stranger and a "heretic"? Simply because she had recognized in me the officer of the Foreign Legion who had once saved her life in Durango. Favor she repaid by favor.

The break of day found me many leagues from the lone hut on the hill-top. I never again saw my preserver, but, while I live, I shall never forget her, the dark-eyed Josa.

## Camp-Fire Yarns.

## The Midnight Fire.

BY RALPH RINGWOOD.

"It ar' perfectly wonderful," said my old friend, Ike Bundy, as we sat talking one night long after the rest of the fellows were asleep. "It ar' perfectly wonderful what fools some men will be when they're in Injun kentry an' know that ev'ry bresh er rock mout hide an enemy."

"What do you allude to?" I asked, knowing there was something interesting to come.



"Well, I wur thinkin' uv three sojers from the fort up yander," he answered—"three reg'lar as had f'nt Injuns a dozen times an' oughter 'a' knowed their ways."

"One mornin', when they went out to look fur their hosses, they found 'em missin', an' 'thout sayin' a word to enybody, they puts out across the perray in search uv the animals. They hunted most uv the day, an' when night kim they wur bogin about Peller canyin, fifteen er twenty miles from Petterman."

"Two uv 'em wur puttin' back, but t'other 'un—Wentworth wur his name—declared that he'd stay thar till mornin' an' have another s'arch fur the hosses."

"Well, they went into the canyin a piece, an' findin' a snug corner where the grass wur soft, two uv 'em stretched out an' fell asleep, leavin' one on guard."

"Durin' the night a bit uv a northerly blowed up, an' it got to be right smartly chilly, so thet the feller on guard concluded to hev a bit uv a bleeze to warm up by."

"Jest think uv it, lad, buildin' a fire in the night time, an' thet in a kentry chock full uv the pizenest kind uv red-skins."

"Well, the fire wur comfort'ble, an' I reckon the poor devil must to hev enjoyed it first-rate, but it wur the last 'un he did enjoy, on this earth, enyhow."

"Long to'ard midnight, Wentworth he waked up, an' seem' the bleeze, got up an' wur about to kick it out, when t'other 'un interferred an' wouldn't let him. The sojer laid down ag'in an' fell asleep, an' purty soon t'other 'un—the one as wur on watch—laid 'longside, an' then the hull uv 'em wur snorin' away."

"Ef one uv 'em on'y had been awake he mout 'a' seen what war goin' on around 'em in the canyin, but thar wur no one, an' the red devils hed it all their own way."

"It warn't long a-comin' fur Injuns don't like to wait when they've got their chance. Frum both sides an' ends uv the gully a dozen er more rifles cracked at onc'e."

"One uv the poor fellows never even budged! He wur shot through the head ar' heart, an' all over. Another 'un jumped up, an' went down ag'in w' a whole grist uv bullets in him."

"But the most wonderfulest part uv the thing ar' 'bout Wentworth. He wur sleepin' an' alween t'other two an' never even wur n' teched."

"He wur a game one, too, an' when he see how things wur, he jess determined to make a dash, an' he did, too."

"Snatchin' his six-shooter, he slipped from the spot whar his comrades lay, but wur headed off by two warriors. These

two he rubbed out quicker nor lightnin', an' then down the canyin he put, the hull crowd arter him, hot an' heavy."

"Another 'un tackled him, an' him he knocked on the head w' the butt uv his six-shooter, an' purty soon arter he shot another. This wur four already, but thar wur a heap more leff."

"At last the game feller got among the mustangs what the Injuns hed left standin' down below, an' runnin' through the lot—'twur good cover, you know—he reched the timber on t'other side uv the crick, an' got off in the dark."

"He got back to the fort at last, but he war nearly ruined fur life w' the sharp rocks an' pricklys, fur, yur see, he didn't hev his shoes on."

"No, I don't onderstan' how sech a man es thet could ever 'a' built a bleeze whar Injuns war about. Don't you never do it, boyee, er they'll sarve you the same way to a dead sartinty."

## Beat Time's Notes.

I HAD music in my soul again the other day. I longed and sighed for the harmony of sweet sounds. I had not money enough to buy one of those organs that are so poetically described as swelling to vaulted roof in cathedral's dim religious light—hadn't money enough to buy one of those swellers, and in default I did the next best thing I could do. I reckless of expenditure, hurried down-town, regardless of creditors, and lavishly imbursed thirty-seven—not hundred dollars—but cents, for a life, yes, life.

It was that kind of music that once stirred the everlasting soul of my boyhood till it melted away into the nullifluous cadences of the Devil's dream, or the girl I left behind me.

I sought my lonely room and blew from the musical hollow of that instrument (it was filled with all kinds of tunes if you gave it the right kind of a blow) the sweet air of "There is a happy land far, far away." In ten minutes my wife came and said she had been hunting high and low for that unearthly wailing, and that she would get a divorce if it wasn't stopped; then in came a delegation of citizens from the remotest part of the city, with no music in their souls, informing me that they would be obliged to seek that happy land far, far away unless that squeal-



ing was discontinued. I have come to the conclusion that this is a great country when a man is not allowed to indulge his musical talents in peace.

We have a new string band. It brings tears to your eyes to hear them even tune their instruments! They can tune all night. The head violinist learned all he knows on a saw and buck. The second violinist got the rudiments of his art on a cornstalk fiddle, and he can lose himself in the harmony of sound more than any man I ever heard play—he is continually lost. The clarinet player got his first start on a dinner-horn out on a farm. The bassoon player never had any musical opportunities; he will tell you so himself, although it is unnecessary. The fellow who plays the cymbals got his musical education by performing on a gong at an up-town hotel. The flute player—well, I'll bet that until last night he couldn't have told a flute from a straw-pile. Last night they disturbed my slumbers. Although the tune was one of my boyhood's favorites I couldn't recognize it. The violin started off a little too fast, however, for the others and then backed a little: this allowed the second violin to get too far ahead; the clarinet then ran into the second violin, and up came the bassoon at very slow time, and injured the tone of both violins; the cymbals clashed together very fast to cheer them on, and scared the flute into a double quick, which got ahead, and the other instruments failed to catch up with it, although there was some of the rapidiest time ever made in music! The flute got out first, as I knew it would, while the others got out as fast as they could, quite out of breath, and then they all went to take a drink quite satisfied, and so was I.

I DESIRED to have the woodwork of my study repainted, so I talked about it to Brown, the painter; found out the cost, and said: "Well, I want you to come and paint it, Brown." I went to the country for a few days to look at the beautiful scenery, and wish that I owned some of it, and when I returned, behold, he had painted it all brown! He had mistaken my commands. He had done it up brown. It is peculiarly awful, for I am obliged to be in a brown study all the time now.

SOME men are so used to lying that they get ashamed of themselves whenever they happen to tell the truth.

LIGHT board—one sawed from a beam of the sun.

## Short Stories from History.

**Walking Under Water.**—In the search for the bodies of those lost by the recent explosion of the Staten Island ferry boat in New York harbor, two divers walked over the ground of the river bottom in the "slip," recovering every one of the dead. This was done, of course, by the submarine "cap," which, by covering the head with a water-tight chamber, receives a supply of air by means of an air injector, in a boat floating above the diver.

This is a modification of the cumbersome old "diving-bell," first used for explorations under water. The first use of this diving-bell, in Europe, was at Toledo, in Spain, in the year 1588, before the Emperor Charles V. and ten thousand spectators. The experiment was made by two Greeks, who, taking a very large kettle, suspended by ropes, with the mouth downwards, fixed planks in the middle of its concavity, upon which they placed themselves, and with a lighted candle gradually descende to a considerable depth.

In 1683, William Phipps, the son of a blacksmith in America, formed a project for searching and unloading a rich Spanish ship sunk on the coast of Hispaniola. He represented his plan in such a plausible manner, that Charles II. gave him a ship, and furnished him with everything necessary for his undertaking; but being unsuccessful, he returned in great poverty. He then endeavored to procure another vessel from James II., but, failing in this, he got a subscription, opened for the purpose, to which the Duke of Albemarle largely contributed. In 1687, Phipps set sail in a ship of two hundred tons burthen to try his fortune once more, having previously engaged to divide the profits according to the twenty shares, of which the subscription consisted. At first all his efforts proved fruitless; but, at last, when he seemed almost to despair of success, he was fortunate enough to bring up so much treasure that he returned to England with the value of two hundred thousand pounds sterling. Of this sum he got about twenty thousand, and the duke ninety thousand pounds. Phipps was knighted by the king, and laid the foundation of the fortunes of the present noble house of Mulgrave.

**The "Old Masters" Humbug.**—We have, in this country, caught the fever for old things. We buy old paintings—begrimed with age; rude and crude as works of art; expressionless in any modern sense, and pay for them shockingly high prices while American art and artists go begging. This subservency is a piece of flunkeyism that deserves exposure and condemnation, particularly as works of the "Old Masters" are now so perfectly imitated by copyists, that seven-tenths of all the professedly valuable old works are but counterfeits.

Some curious stories are told of the tricks that have been played off by artists themselves to expose the hollowiness of this worship of the antique, or of the "Old Masters." Michael Angelo, the great painter, sculptor and architect, was so annoyed by the deference paid, in his day, to the remains of Greek and Roman art, that he resolved to expose its absurdity. He therefore executed a Sleeping Cupid, of which he broke off an arm, and afterward buried the statue in a place where he knew it would soon be found. It was found accordingly, and the critics were never tired of admiring it, as one of the most precious relics of antiquity. It then remained to decide whether it was the work of Phidias, of Lysippus, or of Praxiteles. It was sold to the Cardinal of St. George, to whom Michael Angelo disclosed the whole mystery, by joining to the Cupid the arm which he had reserved.

An anecdote of Peter Mignard is more singular. This great man painted a Magdalen on a canvas, fabricated at Rome. A broker, in concert with Mignard, went to the Chevalier de Clairville, and told him, as a secret, that he was to receive from Italy a Magdalen of Guido, and his masterpiece. The chevalier caught the bait, begged the preference, and purchased the picture at a very high price. Some time afterward, he was informed that he had been imposed upon, for that the Magdalen was painted by Mignard. Although Mignard himself caused the alarm to be given, the amateurs would not believe it; all the connoisseurs agreed it was a Guido, and the famous Le Brun corroborated this opinion.

The chevalier came to Mignard. "There are," he says, "some persons who assure me that my Magdalen is your work." "Mine! they do me great honor; I am sure that Le Brun is not of that opinion." "Le Brun swears it can be no other than a Guido. You shall dine with me, and meet several of the first connoisseurs."

On the day of meeting, the picture was more closely inspected than ever. Mignard hinted his doubts whether the picture was as work of that great master; he insinuated that it was possible to be deceived; and added, "that if it was Guido's, he did not think it in his best manner." "It is a Guido, sir, and in his very best manner," replied Le Brun, with warmth, "I am perfectly convinced." And all the critics unanimously agreed with him. Mignard then spoke in a firm tone of voice: "And I, gentlemen, will wager three hundred louis, that it is not a Guido." The dispute now became violent. Le Brun was desirous of accepting the wager. In a word, the affair became such as could add nothing more to the glory of Mignard. "No, sir," replied the latter, "I am too honest to bet when I am certain to win. Monsieur Le Chevalier, this piece cost you two thousand crowns; the money must be returned—the painting is by my hand." Le Brun would not believe it. "The proof," Mignard continued, "is easy; on this canvas, which is a Roman one, was the portrait of a cardinal. I will show you his cap." The chevalier did not know which of the rival artists to believe; the proposition alarmed him. "He who painted the picture shall mend it," said Mignard. He took a pencil dipped in oil, and rubbing the hair of the Magdalen, discovered the cap of the cardinal—the honor of the ingenious painter could no longer be disputed.

**Correcting a Mistake.**—Francisco Ribalta, having painted a Crucifixion for the Pope's Nuncio at Spain, the picture was taken at Rome; and upon being showed to an eminent painter in that city, he immediately exclaimed, *O Dio mio! Rafael!* judging it to be a capital work of that master. On being told his mistake by the Nuncio, he proceeded to examine it again with great attention, and concluded with a common Spanish proverb, "Where there are mares there will be colts."